Marxism Today

December 83

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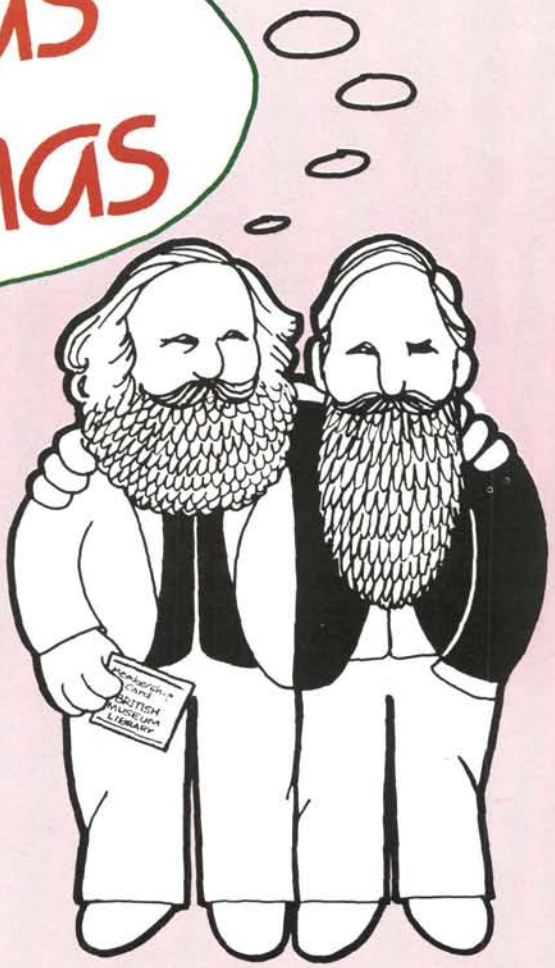

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DISTRIBUTION
Newsagents: Punch Distribution Services 23-27 Tudor Street, London EC4Y 0HR
Subscriptions and bookshops:
Central Books Ltd, 14 The Leathermarket London SE1 3ER

SUBSCRIPTION RATES for one year
Inland: individuals £9, students £7, institutions £12
Overseas: individuals £12, institutions £15

The editor welcomes contributions for publication in the journal. Further details if required from the editorial office. Please send SAE if you want an acknowledgement or manuscript returned.
The views expressed by authors are personal and not necessarily those of the editor or editorial board.

DESIGN Lee Robinson
Jacque Solomons
TYPESET by Verbatim Graphics Ltd
PRINTED by Farleigh Press Ltd (TU)
Watford, Herts

COVER DESIGN: Peter Hammarling
Kathryn Tattersall and cover team.
COVER PHOTO Barry Lewis/Network
MISSILE MODEL Rob Silk

Published by the Communist Party
16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY
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FOCUS

MIRROR'S IMAGE

The decision to sell the *Daily Mirror*, the leftish prodigal of Britain's pops, is good news for the stock market. If all goes well (for owners Reed International, at least) the paper and its stablemates the *Sunday Mirror* and the *People* will be put on the market early next year. The price tag is around £100 million or so, thus a would-be baron will have to fork out £50 million for a controlling interest.

And that is bad news for the Labour Party. Labour leaders are rightly nervous at the prospect of the party's only consistent supporter in the national popular press being thrown into the ring. Few of the institutions and individuals that can afford to buy a controlling interest on the open market are naturally Labour people. The *Mirror's* continued support is seen as crucial to the fortunes of the freshly-scrubbed party which Neil Kinnock wants to put before the electors in four or five years from now.

On occasions the paper's alliance with Labour has looked marginal. Like other national papers, for instance, the *Mirror* revelled in the party's unhappy performance during this year's election campaign. And it is no respecter of manifestos, particularly when they have a left-wing flavour. After last month's massive demonstration of support for CND, the *Mirror* joined with the Fleet Street heavy mob to pour iced water over CND's moment of triumph: 'The demonstration', said an editorial headlined Lost Weekend, 'was one of the biggest ever held in support of the wrong argument at the wrong target'.

But it is churlish to dwell too long on these differences, important though they are in making distinction between a newspaper which says vote Labour and one which is a voice for radical socialism. The *Mirror* is unquestionably Fleet Street's only tabloid with a few shreds of editorial decency still intact. Compared with the comic strip, knockabout lunacy of Murdoch's Sun: the vitriolic Toryism of the *Express* and *Mail;* and the charmless qualities of the *Daily Star,* the *Mirror* remains the only journalistic alternative to a tabloid theatre of the Damned.

Reed International have decided to sell the paper at a time when the newspaper owners are drooling over the prospect of the imminent sale of Reuters which they jointly own. That deal could bring in something over £1,000 million. All the papers stand to make a killing. The Express group has a Reuters stake worth about £120 million. Even the *Guardian,* one of the tiddlers, could cash in chips worth £38 million. For its part the Mirror Group has a stake worth £79 million and it is this Reuters factor which Reed hope will encourage share buyers. Without Reuters, the Mirror has assets of just £34 million.

Clive Thornton

The decision to sell reflects Reed's general unhappiness with the unstable national newspaper market. Last year the Mirror Group contributed £8.1 million profits to the company's purse, but this compares with £26 million profit chipped in by other parts of the Reed organisation which includes the huge IPC magazine publishing machine. It is also a good time to sell. The *Mirror's* circulation which had fallen badly in recent years is now increasing — up to 3,451,000 daily sales in September, a quarter of a million higher than the total for March.

In an attempt to soften the blow to Walworth Road, Reed appointed Clive Thornton from the Abbey National to the Mirror Group chair at the end of October. He has been hailed as the man who will achieve the impossible: bridging the gulf between the City establishment and the Labour leadership. Reed made a great fuss about his working class credentials. He left school at 14 and 'came from a very poor family in the North East'. He could almost be Andy Capp, except that he has made his name in the world of high finance. As Abbey National's chief executive he won a reputation for ruthless and successful innovation. He had done more than most to consolidate the home owning democracy of Britain in the 1980s and he looks, on the face of it, a good choice.

But the appointment could well turn out to be a great irrelevance. When the *Mirror* goes on sale it will become vulnerable to any big-money investor who may, like Sir James Goldsmith for instance, fancy a national newspaper of their own without political strings. No amount of pious commitment can guarantee the *Mirror* for Labour.

One solution that has been suggested is that the unions dip into their members' pockets and buy shares. But they are simply not rich enough to afford a controlling interest. Arthur Scargill has already suggested that the miners' pension fund might be interested. He will have to convince the fund's trustees first, and that is no easy task. The fact that the TUC in Blackpool this year itself was lukewarm to the Macarthy proposal for a £7.5 million investment in a new labour daily indicates that finding £50 million to win the Mirror is utterly beyond the unions.

Of more concern to the unions in the industry, though, is the prospect of the Reuters windfall bolstering national newspaper funds to the point where heavy investment in new technology and worse, investment in a high profile confrontation with the unions, may now be a serious possibility.

Back at the Mirror group much has been made in editorial columns of the sale giving ordinary readers an opportunity to secure the independence of the paper by buying shares themselves. This is dangerous nonsense which columnist Paul Foot highlighted in a recent radio broadcast. Even a multitude of 'ordinary readers' could not compete with the corporate strength of some buyers, like publisher Robert Maxwell, who will be in the race. But even if they had the money, individual and unorganised shareholders would have no influence at all on the paper itself, although they might provide a convenient cover for those predators who may emerge with sizeable chunks in the final share out.

The Mirror's salvation may rest upon the determination of its journalists and print workers not to sacrifice the paper's traditional editorial integrity. The company's journalists will certainly want to have editorial guarantees built into the conditions of sale. But they will have to be somewhat stronger than the 'guarantees' which Rupert Murdoch gave to Parliament to facilitate his takeover of Times

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newspapers. The recent tale of woe published by unfortunate and naive former *Times* editor Harold Evans, who told of his feebleness in the path of a proprietor on the rampage, is ample evidence that nods and winks between well meaning chaps is not enough to preserve editorial freedom.

The staff at the *Daily Mirror* may have to face the daunting task of themselves defending the paper's political traditions, even to the point of industrial action. Without such resolve to back up guarantees of editorial independence the the soft left's only mass circulation pop paper could well disappear without trace.

Aidan White

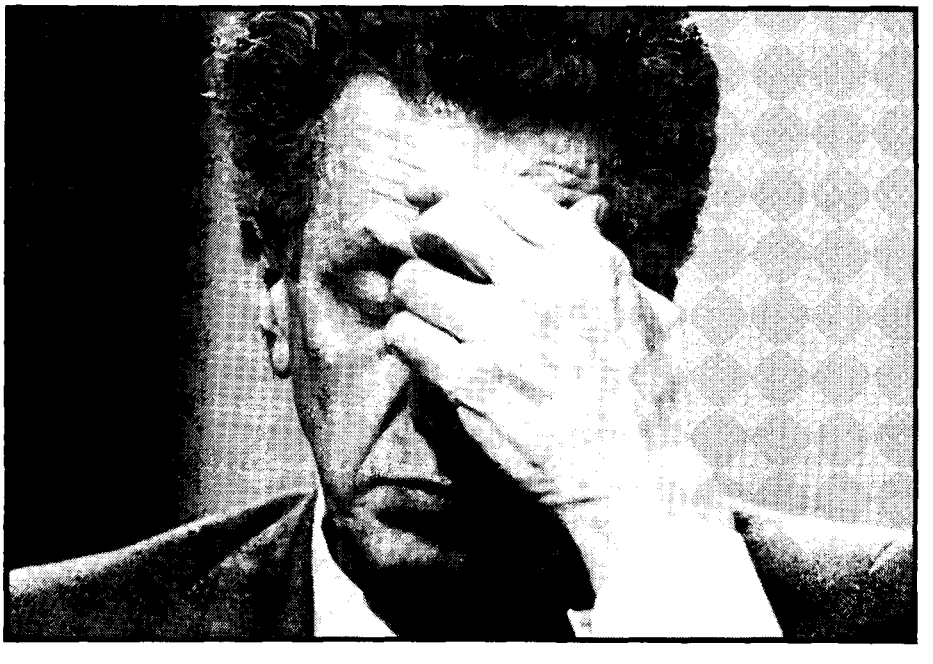
TROUBLE AT THE POLY

It would be misleading to view the Tory strategy for higher education simply in terms of the cutting of resources. While chopping the public sector of the economy remains a continuing theme of the strategy, there are, in common with other areas of Thatcherite policy, a number of distinct political thrusts not directly linked to economic goals. These attempts at political restructuring have enjoyed a varying success rate, dependent in large part upon the level of commitment and will of the institution under attack. The social sciences in higher education are an important example.

Recent weeks have seen the Secretary of State for Education attempting to pick off two social science departments at the Polytechnic of North London. This has occurred within the context of a general attack on the discipline as a whole which has included a consistent campaign against the Social Science Research Council, which appears to have been temporarily concluded with a peaceful change of name that drops the word 'science' from the organisation's title; it has involved constant attacks on the Open University social science department for discussing such things as 'inequality'; and it has led to an assault on the industrial relations unit at Warwick University, which has now been placed under the supervision of the well-known banker Rothschild (though even he has failed to match the minister's simplistic expectations).

Sir Keith Joseph's dislike for social science is reported to originate in the intellectual hammering his infamous 'cycle of deprivation' theory (which provided a reactionary account of the origins of poverty) suffered at the hands of social scientists in the early 1970s. Hell hath no fury like a theorist scorned, even if Sir Keith enjoyed the author's dream of running the show some eight years later. His pathological hatred of the linking of the noun science with the adjective social is well known — it is rumoured that mention of the two words together in the Department of Education and Science is sufficient to find the culprit transferred to inspecting slate roofs in primary schools in the Northern Pennines.

Yet this is not, nor should it be used as, a political explanation for what has become a significant thrust of Tory education strategy. The dislike for social science has come about to an important degree because of its increasing success over the last ten years at finding a 'relevance', and a critical relevance at that.



Those who studied social science in the late 60s and early 70s can remember the two distinct camps that existed within British higher education institutions. Traditionally, social science had emerged in Britain as a set of practices which 'serviced' certain state institutions. It arose very clearly from a concern with detailed social service work in the late 19th century. Indeed, the first three social science departments in the country were created to meet the needs of social work. This function continued and expanded after the second world war. Essentially, social science developed as a *useful* discipline, assisting in the growth and functioning of the social democratic state. As the activities of the social services and other state institutions changed in the 50s and 60s, so the social sciences developed in order to continue playing this 'helpful' role. Underlying this relationship was the view that social problems in a capitalist society *can* be solved if they are correctly studied and understood. The social sciences thus became inextricably linked with a social democratic form of practice.

However, for the children of the 60s (and their teachers) this approach was considered insufficient, both intellectually and as a guide to political action. It failed for Marxist social scientists, who needed more independent academic institutions within which to develop and refine their theories and to engage in political activities. For non-Marxists as well, the traditional role of the social sciences was unsatisfactory; they rejected the role of simply working out solutions for problems confronting state institutions. Instead, they wanted the opportunity to discuss with other like-minded intellectuals their own set of 'problems' and the solutions to them. Consequently, the early 70s saw the creation of a range of 'conferences' and organisations of social scientists reflecting the new concerns and preoccupations of the discipline. In a wide variety of fields there was a move away from 'usefulness' and towards the study of problems generated from within the discipline itself. In many ways, social scientists were seeking the role of the traditional intellectual, rejecting the idea that they should concentrate exclusively on problems set by others. Such a 'pure' approach had little direct political relevance; indeed, it tended to reproduce from a left perspective the activity of the Oxbridge don.

In directing their energies against intellectuals such as these, the Tories' task has not been difficult. As Norman Tebbit has said, 'We've taken the money away

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from the people who write about ancient Egyptian scripts and the pre-nuptial habits of the Upper Volta valley'. The social science equivalents of such examples are well documented, and their lack of appeal to any particular class or fraction within British society is apparent. It is not surprising that such social science has little ability to defend itself in the face of Tory attacks.

However, the 70s did, in a number of areas, see the development of a more critical yet applied social science approach. Some of this was Marxist, but by no means all. Among other things, this approach did provide a detailed critique of the 'cycle of deprivation' theory in theoretical, political and empirical terms. It also provided the ghosts that so frightened the authors of the notorious 1977 Gould report, which examined Marxist penetration of higher education. The report praised those Marxists who had retained the traditional role of the distanced intellectual, but it launched a detailed but paranoid and ill-researched attack upon those on the Left who had succeeded in their attempts to relate theory to practice; on those who talked of probation officers and not those who talked of forces of production.

So this is how the present assault is constructed. The Tories successfully attack some intellectuals for their lack of relevance, yet they reserve further efforts for those who have attempted to give their discipline a relevance to broad sections of society. The struggle within the social sciences is no longer about whether or not they should be applied, or relevant to the problems facing British society; the success of Thatcherism has rendered such a debate obsolete. Instead it is about who the discipline is applying itself to, and in what ways it is doing so. The social science department at North London Polytechnic, the latest ideological battleground, has attracted attention not simply because of the innovative manner in which it approaches social science problems, but also because it has been active in encouraging a relatively new type of student intake. It is closely involved with further and adult education departments within the Inner London Education Authority in an effort to expand higher education opportunities among working class and ethnic minority communities and for women, in other words to take 'equality of opportunity' seriously. These efforts have been met by a whole array of enquiries and inspections, but they have succeeded in relating social sciences to a large number of people outside the traditionally-conceived 'academic' sphere. Alliances have been built in this process which, together with the discipline's continuing efforts to achieve a critical relevance, could inhibit the Tories' capacity to mobilise against the social sciences. Not all the cards are in Sir Keith's hands.

Paul Corrigan

HONGKONG: CRISIS? WHAT CRISIS?

A year ago, Hongkong's Stock Market index stood at 1,600 and the Hongkong dollar was 5.50 to the US dollar. Today the market index hovers nervously at 800 and the dollar is pegged to the US at 7.80 only through massive government intervention that effectively mortgages the entire government assets to exhaustion if the current run against the HK dollar continues. The consulates in the colony cannot cope with visa applications and the Chinatowns of London, Toronto, New York etc, are groaning with hot HK money as the local punters hedge their bets. The Governor, Youde, the Peking Ambassador, Craddock, sundry placemen and compradores from Hongkong's Executive Council are on permanent shuttle between Hongkong, London and Peking, the Foreign Office maintains a po-faced silence on the talks and Peking has launched several different trial-balloons on the future of the colony whose main effect is to depress the stock market and drive the dollar lower. What is going on here?

The crisis has its origin in the 19th century treaties that 'legalised' Britain's colonial thievery during the Opium Wars. The treaty of 1898 which *leased* the New Territories (with 95% of the colonies land area in them) expires in 1997. Britain asserts their validity and claims sovereignty now via them. China denies their validity and asserts her intention to take all of Hongkong back at some date. A number of different formulations have appeared according to which Peking official is quoted by which newspaper: 'soon', 'when the time is ripe', '1997' and so on. Now, the problem for Britain and Hongkong is that because Britain asserts the validity of the treaty, it has to abide by its provisions — all of them, including the terminal expiry date. This means that the Hongkong government cannot issue leases for land in the New Territories for periods that extend beyond 1997 — so that this year you can get one for 14 years, next year for 13 etc. This in turn imposes real difficulty in financing new projects since the conventional and sensible term for mortgages is 15 years and the money loaned needs to be backed with valid title to the land in question in the form of a valid lease. Bankers are a bit less gullible than politicians when confronting the vacuous blandishments that have appeared in Hongkong and elsewhere about the future of Hongkong's capitalist economy and are increasingly not putting up the dough. The last major capital project — the Mass Transit Railway — was guaranteed by Hongkong government assets and the vitally needed second airport remains unbuilt because of trouble over amortising the estimated £1,000 million it would need, and commercial bankers won't touch the project because of the lease problem. The knock-on effect for smaller investors has been noticeable, with other projects shelved, the property market in deep trouble, shares depressed in very weak trading, several major business conglomerates facing bankruptcy, the directors of one under arrest for fraud and the first bank collapse has already occurred.

Marxism Today readers will need little reminding that prior to the crisis, Hongkong was one of the few prospering capitalisms around. It made a lot of money for a few exceedingly rich people, both local Chinese and expatriate Brits, and the whole pulsing mess was much caressed by the bankers, insurers and shippers of the City for the remarkable profits it brought them. The net rake-off for them is probably in the region of £1,500 million ie, roughly on the scale of the return on British investments in South Africa. Part of this distillate of workers' sweat also made it across the border — mostly through the sale of water and foodstuffs — to form a major element in the People's Republic of China's foreign earnings.

Internally, although society is pretty wretched — with a corrupt and brutal police (the best force money can buy), little social welfare provision, rotten hospital service, a cowed and fractured trade union movement etc — little active opposition to British rule has developed since the cultural revolution riots of 1967. While only a handful of local people are overtly pro-British, neither are they particularly keen on reversion to full control by Peking. What pro-PRC attitudes there are seem more an expression of residual Chinese nationalism than adherence and support of the policies of the PRC. British colonial policy has been successful in preventing the emergence of a distinct and politically articulated sense of HK-belonging, often justified (with no evidence provided) by the notion that Peking would object. The reality is that those policies have been

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designed to head off anything that challenged colonial rule. Despite objective conditions that should have produced revolt — lousy housing, appalling accident rates, blindness among young female operatives in the electronics industry, the use of carcinogenic solvents long ago banned in the West — a combination of a neo-colonial education system, market forces, an efficient Special Branch and the discreet presence of the brigade of Ghurkas has produced the desired effect.

So: both Britain and China make a nice few bob out of the place, no internal threat is apparent; what is stopping the pragmatic realists of Deng Xiaoping's inner circle from doing the sensible thing over this little scrap of paper that is causing the crisis, *viz*, re-negotiate the lease?

The simple answer is that they either can't or won't, most likely the former. I know of no reputable sinologist that will predict such a course — indeed the whole idea is ludicrous. In Chinese eyes, such an act would be one of colluding with imperialism and shamefully perpetuating the humiliations China suffered during the 19th century. Deng Xiao-ping could not survive such an attack, let alone lesser figures. Forget it.

Neither will a number of equally unlikely suggestions floated by the Foreign Office, the Hongkong Government Office in London and the herd of flacks, hacks and toadies that plant these ideas in 'respectable' newspapers work either. The latest is a suggestion that Britain would cede sovereignty but retain a substantial presence in 'administration', ie, the flag changes and little else. The problem here is that sovereignty is indivisble: the least acknowledgement by China of a legitimate role for Britain *after* it had regained *de jure* and *de facto* sovereignty would, in international law, weaken China's claim to have that exact sovereignty. The continuance of British legal jurisdiction, the circulation of the HK dollar, the operation of commercial laws (such as they are) different to those of the rest of China — all these are *simultaneously* essential for the operation of HK capitalism *and* the kiss of death to an international acceptance of China's claim to be exercising that sovereignty. It won't work.

So, what are the present negotiations about, you might well ask? As far as I can see, they are about the date and details of handover. There is a convergence of Chinese and British interests in keeping everything secret until the very last moment. From Britain's point of view, the main aim is to keep out as many as possible of HK's 3 million 'British' citizens. There are too many of them and they are the wrong colour. Not to put too fine a point on this, this is an act of grotesque and unforgiveable racist cynicism, not to mention the moral cowardice in saying to a population twice the size of Israel 'we've had your money: thanks and fuck off.' The whole intent of the legislation on Dependent Territories under the British Nationality Act 1982 was to that effect.

China has a vested interest in preventing *part* of HK's population from leaving because it wants to retain and use HK's valuable human resources for its own programme of modernisation. Hongkong contains tens of thousands of exactly what China as a whole lacks: technicians, scientists, programmers, managers, bullion dealers etc, all bi-lingual, trained by somebody else and proficient in the latest technology. This, for a country that has problems because it lacks sufficient heavy lorry-drivers, is an asset they cannot afford to squander. And the logic of China's position on the treaties is that they are all Chinese citizens and amenable to Chinese law. However, this section of the people will have the most to lose after reversion and be the group most likely to try and leave in the interim.

China has a different problem, which is to portray the takeover to world opinion as being desired by and in the interests of the mass of HK's people. It is conducting a campaign, initially among younger intellectuals, to marshall support for the changeover. At this stage it is hard to see how successful they will be but there is no doubt as to the effort they are putting into the scheme.

Other sectional interests are lobbying too — ranging from HK business folk twisting arms at the Commons with backbench Tories to the indefatigable Greg Benton arguing that the proper way to deal with the situation is to overthrow the colonial state and establish a workers' (ie, Trotskyist) regime so as to form a base from which socialism (ie, Trotskyism) can be spread to the rest of China. (See his book *The Hongkong Crisis*, Pluto Press, 1983). This last idea is unlikely to take place.

It is a damming indictment of the British Left that we have neglected Hongkong over the years. We have better links with Nicaragua than with our own colonial sisters and brothers who are fellow citizens with a long history of oppression by *our* ruling class. But make no mistake, we will have plenty of opportunity to reflect on our sins in the years to come. Internationally, we have the prospect of a new wave of 'boat people' in the South China Sea — except this lot will be waving perfectly useless British passports at the cameras. At home, we will be welcoming — just as Hongkong welcomed them from Shanghai in 1949 — a job-lot of crooks and gangster of every description — brothel-keepers, heroin- dealers, Triad-members and ex-Special Branch thugs. They will have valid British passports with permission to stay.

Walter Easey

IRAN—STATEMENT

On page 32 of this issue we carry an article on Iran. Readers will be interested in the following statement on Iran adopted by the Communist Party at its 38th National Congress as we went to press.

This Congress condemns the actions taken by the Iranian authorities against members and supporters of the Tudeh Party of Iran, and other anti-imperialist and patriotic forces in Iran. We believe that this repression marks a move away from the popular and democratic character and achievements of February 1979 which the Tudeh Party of Iran has consistently fought for and defended, in order to secure independence, freedom and social justice for the Iranian people.

We demand that the Iranian authorities release all those Tudeh Party comrades and other progressives arrested and unjustly imprisoned.

We further demand that the United Nations, the International Red Cross and other recognised international aid agencies be given access to all political prisoners to view the health and condition of the prisons and prisoners.

We re-affirm our solidarity, and call upon all British democrats and members of the labour movement likewise to express their solidarity with the Tudeh Party of Iran and to support solidarity actions and the work of the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian Revolution (CODIR).

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THIRD WORLD BOOK REVIEW

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Grenada is not an isolated issue. It reflects the growing importance of the thirld world in international politics. And it has exposed underlying conflicts between Britain and the US.

John Cox

America Presents Arms

Castro's first comment on the US invasion of Grenada was to call it a 'political error' — this somewhat mild reaction reflected long experience of US military harassment and an expectation of similar actions in future. By contrast, Reagan's allies were less restrained and, on the surface, more astonished at the display of force and by the lack of consultation with close friends. The reaction of America's allies may be more appropriate than Cuba's relatively phlegmatic response. The Grenada invasion typifies a more aggressive posture towards Cuba and the Soviet Union, a more interventionist policy towards the third world and more and greater assertiveness with respect to its allies.

It also confirmed widespread fears that the present US government, under Reagan, has little regard for the principles of the UN Charter and will resort to military action whenever it sees fit. Moreover, by his summary dismissal of Mrs Thatcher's opposition, Reagan has discredited the so-called 'special relationship' between the British and American government. One immediate effect in Britain has been to stiffen opposition to Cruise missiles and to place the British government on the defensive in respect to 'dual-key' control with the US.

Far reaching implications

But the lessons are more far-reaching than those already affecting peace campaigning. This invasion was no aberration, a 'political error' blotting an otherwise unblemished history of adherence to the principle of non-interference. The USA has long used military force for political ends: according to one authoritative study on 215 occasions between January 1946 and December 1975. Only rarely, as in Korea, Vietnam, Guatemala, Cuba, Dominica and the Lebanon, has this aspect of US policy come under close public scrutiny.

These earlier interventions by the US took place during the decolonisation struggles of the 1950s and, in Vietnam and Chile, during the years of detente. More recently the role of the US towards third world countries has been overshadowed by the publicity given to the Soviet role in Afghanistan and Poland and, in the light of this, it is opportune to recall this past record of US interference. But the object of such recollection should not be to draw up a sterile balance-sheet between the USA and the USSR to castigate, explain, excuse or support Soviet actions with unconvincing parallels. The point of this assessment is to examine how this conflict in the third world fuels the nuclear arms race.

Whilst the impending arrival of US Cruise missiles remains the most immediate threat from the US to Britain, it is noteworthy that nuclear weapons account for less than 10% of US military expenditure — a lower proportion than spent on 'conventional arms' that could be used in the third world. So the attention given by the US to the third world, and the strain this imposes on the Anglo-American 'special relationship', is not a peripheral issue of only marginal concern to the nuclear arms race. On the contrary, it is a major arena of conflict between the superpowers and, in consequence, a fundamental cause of the nuclear arms race.

Literally hundreds of books and dozens of theories have been written to explain why the arms race continues — despite an almost universal fatalistic acceptance that the only possible outcome will be a nuclear holocaust which would destroy all existing social and political systems. This article does not attempt to add to these theories: it is confined to factors which link third world struggles and the events in Grenada to the conflict between the superpowers and strains within the Anglo-American relationship.

Changes in the Third World

During the years immediately following the Second World War, the world was redivided in accordance with the new balance of forces and its initial centre of political conflict was in Europe. By 1950 it was clear that the new boundaries, short of all-out war, had become permanent and the main focus of attention then shifted to the third world. In the years following many nations achieved independence — although there were also major defeats (revolutionary movements in Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines were suppressed and nationalist regimes in Guatemala and Iran overthrown with the aid of US, British and other Western powers).

In these conflicts the Soviet Union was an ally of the forces for national independence whilst the USA, partly because of its own historical experience but also to expand its own economic interests, was an unreliable ally of the older imperial powers (in Iran the USA used the overthrow of the Mosadeq government to displace British influence). But the main political lesson for the West during the 1950s was that the later national independence was delayed the more probable it became that the new state would be influenced by socialist ideas.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, this phase of decolonisation was ending with the consolidation of several radical independent states (Cuba, Algeria, Iraq) and a much larger number of nominally independent states. Most of the latter had been granted a precipitate independence to ensure that they remained subservient to Western economic and political interests. By the early 1960s only a few colonial disputes continued (the Portugese empire remained intact and genuine independence for Vietnam and Rhodesia remained in contention).

One immediate effect in Britain has been to stiffen opposition to Cruise missiles.

Thus, during the period of detente (from about 1963) the rivalry of the superpowers in the third world went through a period of relative stability — despite the trauma of Vietnam which the Americans always accepted to be a continuation of past decolonisation struggle and, for this reason, not a creation of Soviet subversion. During this same period the Soviet Union learnt to adjust to the new situation, developing diplomatic links with the neo-colonial states and generally behaving in a much more cautious manner than during the Khruschev years.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, with the outstanding exception of Vietnam noted above, the general trend in the third

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world was to the liking of the USA — notably in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and a host of former French and British colonies. Even in the cases where coups brought into power more radical regimes (Libya, Somalia) the leftwards orientation of these governments was slow to evolve. In this same period the US was engaged openly in Dominica (with US troop landings) and in Cuba (various provocations), Chile (overthrow of Allende) and, but more covertly, in Zaire, Ghana and Mali.

A new phase

This phase ended in 1974 with the leftist coup in South Yemen, the deposition of the Ethiopian ruler Haile Selassie, and with the collapse of the Portugese empire leading to the establishment of revolutionary regimes in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Mozambique which, in their turn, influenced the developments culminating in Zimbabwe's independence. Since then, radical anti-western governments emerged in a host of other third world countries (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Benin, Madagascar, Libya, Liberia, Iran, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Grenada) — some by revolution but most by a fairly slow process of radicalisation.

The Soviet Union was not involved directly in these developments but did play an important role in supporting socialist-leaning governments — directly by the supply of economic and social aid and, occasionally, indirectly with military aid. In Angola and Ethiopia Cuban forces aided governments under attack from Western-backed forces and, although these were undoubted Cuban initiatives, they were supported by the Soviet Union.

One important factor in the breakdown of detente has been the USA's perception of what detente meant for the third world. They hoped, and appear to have believed, that it involved an understanding with the Soviet Union to 'freeze' the spheres of influence then existing (except for Indo-China). As it happened, the new wave of third world revolutions coincided with the post-Vietnam period when it was politically impossible for the US to commit forces to roll back the tide. The frustration of the US Right built up during this period (from 1974) as they witnessed what they interpreted as unopposed Soviet-backed revolutions throughout the third world.

Whether or not the USSR did agree that detente meant an end to aid to revolutionary forces in the third world, and whether or not the USSR did help any of these revolutions, is of little consequence: the foremost US spokesmen for detente (Nixon, Kissinger) claim that the revolutions received Soviet assistance in violation of the understandings of detente. Their interpretation of events was, and still is, accepted by most leading US politicians and is a major influence on current US policies.

By 1977 the US was emerging from its post-Vietnam isolationism and pressure built up to halt the continuing anti-US trends in the third world. This was the reason why Carter initially attempted a liberal policy towards human rights — with the aim of re-establishing the moral credibility of the US in the third world. But because the US was intimately linked with reactionary regimes (such as the Shah's Iran), the liberal policy was inconsistent. The Khomeini revolution, and the trauma of the hostages, discredited 'the liberal option'. After this (1979), Carter adopted more aggressive anti-Soviet policies which, though this was hardly his intention, created the ideal atmosphere for the resurgence of the new Right under Reagan.

The foregoing suggests that US disillusionment with detente — and its adoption of a more aggressive foreign policy — derives at least as much from political changes in the third world — and their perception of the Soviet role in this — than from disputes over arms control. Another factor has been the decline of the economic fortunes of the West, coinciding with detente, which has complicated relations between the US, the third world and its Western allies.

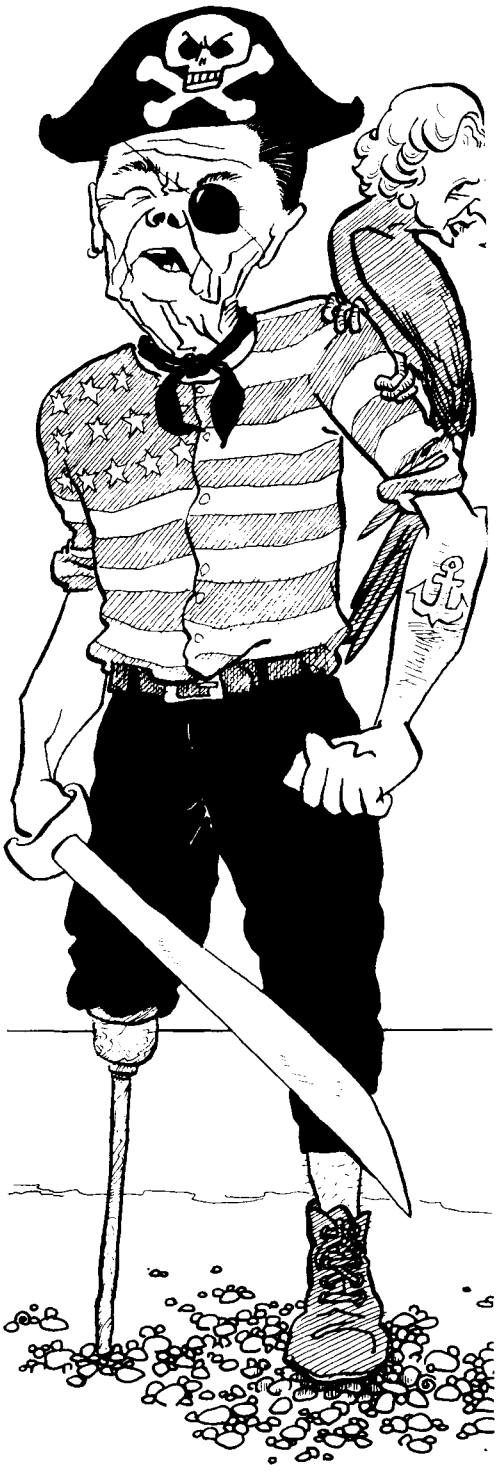
North-South rivalries

Since 1960 the economic lead of the leading industrial nations has been eroded by some third world nations — by the OPEC countries (with their twenty-fold oil price rises) and by the 'NICs' (Newly Industrialised Countries whose annual growth rates of around 15% greatly exceed the 3-4% average of the leading Western powers). During this same period the US has imported large quantities of manufactured goods from the third world, including some strategic commodities such as microchip components.

These developments have made US politicians and public much more sensitive to political changes in the third world than hitherto. Moreover, whereas the concern used to be primarily for the specific interests of particular companies (as in the 'banana republics' of Central America), today the concern is for the political and economic implications in both the US and the rest of the capitalist world.

Reality is, however, of less significance than the perception of reality — the downturn in the US economy has led US politicians to look outside the USA to find scapegoats for their difficulties. Just as immigrants can be blamed at home for unemployment, bad housing and anything else for which there is no easy solution, the Soviet Union and the third world provide a ready scapegoat on the international scene, leading US politicians to advocate interventionist policies with greater vigour.

No one, not even Reagan, can claim that the Grenada invasion protected vital US economic interests. Nevertheless, Reagan



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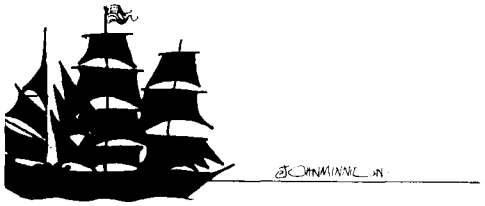
did claim, with good reason, that the invasion would serve as a warning to the world that the US would act to protect (what it claims to be) its national interests. For third world countries the Grenada invasion was a clear warning of what might happen to them if they tried to reduce their economic dependence on the capitalist world.

West-West rivalries

Within the leading industrial nations, the dominant position of the US economy now is threatened by Japan and Europe. Because inter-capitalist rivalry in general is conducted without public acrimony and in political unity, the public face of conflict often has been defence of a country or region from Soviet penetration.

For example, the overthrow of the Mosadeq government enabled the US, under the cloak of anti-communism, to replace the British in Iran. Other instances occurred as colonies became independent and opened their markets to the USA, West Germany and Japan. In this way the 'give-them-independence' strategy, which was designed to thwart Soviet influence, has helped the US and other capitalist countries at the expense of the former imperial powers. Since then similar changes have taken place in independent countries — for example, Pakistan, Malayasia, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Zaire.

The fate of Plessey's £8million contract for Grenada's new international airport follows this tradition. The Reagan government claimed that it was to be a military airport — ignoring the views of the 16 countries involved that this was not so. After the invasion Plessey equipment was looted by US troops and now, so spokesmen for Plessey claim, US contractors are likely to complete the airport construction.



Nor is the use of anti-Soviet propaganda for commercial ends confined to the third world. Out of concern for Western Europe security, the USA tried to dissuade its allies from participation in the Soviet gas pipeline deal. Without doubt, another important objective was to keep Europe more dependent on the USA.

> A coincidence of political, economic and military factors has put the third world in the front line of a worldwide anti-communist crusade

Similarly, the US pressed for economic sanctions against Poland and the Soviet Union. Not one of the commodities the USA recommended for the sanctions list had significance for US commercial interests whilst — could it be a coincidence? — US-Soviet grain deals were left inviolate. In both instances, anti-Soviet propaganda corresponded to America's national commercial interests and was — at the very least — a secondary reason for American policy.

The arms race

The arms race is a product of arms control agreements, the relative strengths of superpowers' forces, the strength of the US military-industrial complex, European politics and many other factors way beyond the scope of this article. Whilst it is appreciated that this will give only a partial explanation of the breakdown of detente , only those factors of direct relevance to US attitudes to the third world and to its European allies are mentioned herein.

Many contemporary analyses, in challenging the arguments of those responsible for the current acceleration in the arms race, examine the breakdown of detente primarily in terms of the East-West military balance and the political situation in Europe . There are three fundamental reasons for doubting that Europe and/or the 'Soviet threat' are, in reality, primary causes for the breakdown of detente:

1 The 1975 Helsinki Conference on European Security settled all unresolved boundary disputes from the Second World War and all signatory states pledged then not to disturb these boundaries by force. Theoretically, Europe no longer has any outstanding disputes that might lead to war.

2 The annual increase in Soviet arms spending was 14% per annum from 1960-63 and dropped to below 4% pa over 1963-68 (as detente developed). Since then it declined further — to around 2% per annum during 1975-77. If detente could last for over a decade with a declining annual increase in Soviet arms spending, we must look elsewhere to explain Carter's decision in 1978 to raise the US annual increase to 4% (and to demand a 3% pa rise from its NATO allies).

3 Although NATO's decision on Cruise and Pershing was taken formally in 1978, it was under discussion in 1977 when the Soviet Union (with support from West Germany) wanted, and the USA refused, to include intermediate range nuclear weapons in the then current arms control negotiations. At that time the USSR had not yet deployed any SS-20s; quite clearly, the USA had already decided that detente would not be extended to weapons in Europe.

If Euro/Soviet affairs cannot explain why detente faltered, what about the third world? During detente their military expenditure rose faster than NATO and the Warsaw Pact, with a five-fold rise (in real money terms) in the trade in armaments (around $60 thousand million during 1969-1979). Two-thirds of the global arms trade is to third world countries and 45% of these arms exports are from the USA.

So, throughout detente, whilst arms expenditure rose in all countries, the biggest increase was in the third world. In consequence, third world disputes have assumed greater significance and this, in turn, has increased superpower involvement (especially for the US) in third world affairs. A coincidence of political, economic and military factors has put the third world in the front-line of a worldwide anti-communist crusade whilst the conjunction of Reagan and Thatcher has put the crusade in the hands of anti-Soviet zealots.

The special relationship

No discussion of recent events would be complete without considering how the close ideological affinity between Thatcher and Reagan has rekindled the Anglo-American 'special relationship' and the impact that this has had on world affairs.

The mutual admiration of Thatcher and Reagan goes way beyond their shared fear and hatred of the Soviet Union. They agree on a wide range of social and economic issues: monetarism, attitudes to trade unions and social welfare and, most striking of all, they are equally adept at media manipulation. With Reagan and Thatcher reinforcing each other's prejudices and

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'morality', this has added a strong personal element to the Anglo-American alliance.

Their closest bond is in their use of the anti-Soviet card. Only a very deep ignorance of world affairs — or a highly-developed mendacity — could allow Reagan to suggest, as he did after the Grenada invasion, that America's enemies in the Lebanon were part of the same worldwide Soviet-backed conspiracy that the US had just repulsed in Grenada. Only a fully conscious hypocrite could attempt, as Thatcher did, to link the Argentine junta (for whom she had acquired a sudden revulsion following the Falklands invasion) with the Soviet Union.

US media control during the Grenada invasion recalled similar British measures during the Falklands campaign. Thatcher's manipulation of the media in regard to the sinking of the General Belgrano was capped by Reagan's use of mistranslations of Soviet messages relating to the Korean airliner. In regard to policy, action and media manipulation, the example of Thatcher has influenced Reagan — and vice versa.

In 1984 Reagan faces re-election and, already, it was foreseen that he 'needed a Falklands'. Grenada could be his Falklands: the mini-invasion giving him military success and raising jingoist fervour just as the Lebanon bombing revived memories of Vietnam's Tet offensive in 1968. One suspects also that the memory of what the Iranian hostage crisis did to Carter may have loomed very large in his decision. Thatcher, perhaps, would have done the same.

BUT, and it is a very big 'BUT', this ideological affinity has masked a growing divergence between the US and British national interests

BUT, and it is a very big 'BUT', this ideological affinity has masked a growing divergence between the US and British national interest which only rarely surfaces, as over the Falklands (and Argentina), the Euro-Soviet pipeline deal and now, dramatically, over Grenada.

It is not simply that Grenada is a Commonwealth country, that the Queen's representative has been placed (or dragged) into America's pocket, that Thatcher's advice was ignored or even that Plessey's contract has been looted. All of this could be smoothed over were it an isolated incident. What Grenada highlighted was that the ideological unity of Thatcher and Reagan is that of rival mobsters in the face of a police raid. Only the common foe keeps them from self-destruction.

The invasion has been condemned in British ruling circles as the end of the 'special relationship' yet, so far, the alternative is unclear. Malcolm Rutherford suggests, 'the special relationship . . . seemed to be much in evidence between Mrs Thatcher and President Reagan, though perhaps it was more ideological than strategic.' He expressed doubts about 'how far Europe can support what appears to be an ideological crusade against the Soviet Union' and concluded. '. . . successive British governments have been living in a fools' paradise in looking to Washington first, and Europe second. In future, it should be the other way round.'

But Europe is not the only alternative. Do not underestimate Mrs Thatcher! Already, in the aftermath of the Grenada invasion, she has distanced herself from the USA over its Lebanon policy. Were it not for her strong commitment to Cruise and Trident, Thatcher even now might 'go-it-alone' — a 'Gaullist' stance on which she might ride high on a wave of jingoist popularity. The end of the special relationship could be a mixed blessing. □

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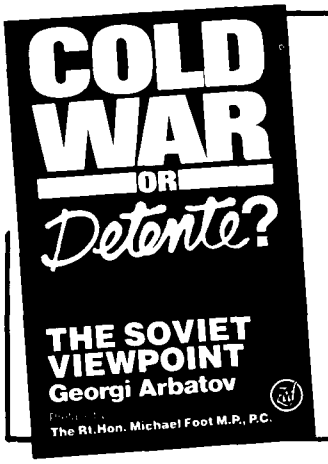

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Bloody Sunday rally, November 1982

The US invasion has destroyed a revolution in its infancy.

Andy Green

The Caribbean's Stolen Jewel

Grenada's revolution

The American invasion of Grenada on October 25 has many historical precedents. The US military has directly intervened in the region no less than 135 times in the past century. Nor will it have surprised the people of Grenada who were well aware of the growing hostility of the White House towards their revolution. It was only last February that President Reagan in a national television speech, condemned Grenada as a 'threat to America national security'.

American destabilisation, through propaganda, military intimidation and economic sabotage, has been a daily fact of life for Grenadians since the People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) took power in 1979. However, the clearest warning of American intentions came with the 'Ocean venture' manoeuvres in 1981. At that time 12,000 US troops, 250 warships and 1,000 aircraft took part in a mock invasion of Vieque Island near Puerto Rico. The operation was code-named 'Amber and Amberines', echoing Grenada and Grenadines, and was undertaken as a rehearsal for the future invasion of Grenada.

It would be fruitless at this point to speculate about the confused events leading up to the killing of Maurice Bishop and four of his Cabinet colleagues on October 19, or to predict the immediate future of the New Jewel Movement which led Grenada's four year revolution. It is important, however, to sketch out the history of this youthful revolution whose popularity and economic achievements invoked such hostility from the US.

Origins of the revolution

The origins of the 1979 revolution, the first in the English-speaking Caribbean, lie in the corruption, neglect and personal megalomania that characterised the 23 years of government under Eric Gairy.

Although he came to power in 1951 through his leadership of the small farmers and plantation workers, Gairy failed in government to bring concrete benefits to any section of the population, except a small group of followers and businessmen whom he patronised in return for political support. Increasingly despised by the estate-owning plantocracy, the new black commercial middle class and the working class alike, Gairy could only consolidate his power by corruption, patronage, electoral fraud and the spreading of superstition amongst the people. Meanwhile the public sector was pillaged, the education and hospital services declined and roads and other infrastructure fell into chronic disrepair.

Despite the growing disaffection of various strata, no effective opposition emerged until the early 1970s. The return of Maurice Bishop in 1970 marked the beginning of a movement towards polarisation, as his immediate leadership of a large demonstration in solidarity with worker uprisings in Trinidad precipitated Gairy's introduction of Emergency Powers. There were further major popular uprisings in the next two years. Bishop, Radix and Whiteman, who were all to go on to lead the future revolutionary government, emerged as leading figures in these mobilisations and by 1973 they had formed the New Jewel Movement (NJM). Two NJM people's congresses in the same year each drew over 10,000 participants, the latter calling on Gairy to resign or face a general strike. Gairy's response was to intensify physical coercion and on November 18, 'Bloody Sunday', 6 NJM leaders were arrested and brutally beaten by Gairy's private army known as the Mongoose gang.

Growing popular resistance and increasingly brutal repression were the hallmark of the next five years as the NJM consolidated its support amongst workers and peasants. A three month strike followed Gairy's refusal to accede to the Duffus commission's recommendation to disband the Mongoose gang and ended with the murder of Rupert Bishop, Maurice Bishop's father. Gairy's further survival rested on the fixing of the 1976 election, the enactment of repressive legislation like the banning of public sector strikes in 1978 and the unlimited tyranny of the Green Beast army and Mongoose gang, which were responsible for numerous other political assassinations. By the end of the decade Gairy's reputation had reached its nadir.

The final overthrow of Eric Gairy and the installation of the Peoples' Revolutionary Government took place on March 13 1979 in a decisive and largely unopposed movement. Following the leak of an intended plot by Gairy, to be staged whilst he was out of the country, armed

C Searle *The Struggle Against Destabilisation.*

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supporters of the NJM stormed the army barracks at True Blue, before proceeding to take control of the island radio station. Here, they announced that the Gairy government had fallen and called on the people to come out in support of the New People's Government. The response was massive and within hours the last police station had surrendered. When Gairy finally tendered his resignation (from the US) on March 20, 20,000 people turned out in Queen's Park stadium to celebrate.

An enormous task

The fact that the revolutionary takeover was quick, almost bloodless, and required relatively few armed revolutionaries, indicates, not, as some have claimed, that it was a mere *coup d'etat*, but that it was overwhelmingly popular and faced little serious resistance. However it should be seen as the beginning of a revolution and not its accomplishment. The broad masses of rural and urban workers had risen to depose Gairy and shown their decisive support for a revolution which was, in Maurice Bishop's words, 'for work, for food, for decent housing and health services, and for a bright future for our children.' The local bourgeoisie showed, for the time being at least, their qualified approval.

The tasks that lay ahead were enormous. Three hundred years of British and French colonisation and 23 of 'Hurrican Gairy' had left a country with derelict social services, one secondary school and virtually no industry. Its economy was exceptionally weak, depending for revenue on exports, of which 97% came from three crops — nutmeg, banana and cocoa. It suffered from the classic colonial economic legacy of dependence on world market prices for a narrow range of exports and of the under-development of its primary sector, agriculture. 95% of Grenadian farms are small peasant holdings of less than 5 acres, traditionally worked without mechanisation or fertiliser, in most cases for subsistence not sale. Coupled with this is a high rate of emigration amongst the most economically active and a deeply ingrained economic individualism amongst the working people, the majority of whom are small peasant farmers. They have no experience of socialised production and a deep historic antipathy towards working for 'massa' inherited from slavery, predisposing many towards self employment.

Along with economic under-development the other major problem for the revolution was the daily reality of American destabilisation.

US destabilisation

US economic destabilisation was thorough and unremitting. Not content with withdrawing its own aid, the US government did everything possible to block aid from other sources; including attempting to stop the April 1981 EEC Conference in Brussels from voting aid for the international airport, ensuring that Grenada was excluded from aid after Hurricane Allen and, in June 1981, offering the Caribbean Development Bank $4m on the condition that Grenada was excluded from the beneficiaries. Although the US failed to have Grenada expelled from CARICOM, the Caribbean Economic Community, it was engaged in constant anti-PRG propaganda in the other Caribbean states and, through its influence over prominent right wing newspapers like Jamaica's *Daily Gleaner*, put out a barrage of propaganda against Grenada.

It was in this context of economic under-development, US destabilisation and still burgeoning revolutionary consciousness amongst the mass of the people that the socialist NJM set its priorities for the revolution. In the first instance they had to be the defence of the revolution, the achievement of immediate social and economic gains for the people, and the deepening of political consciousness and mass involvement. In the two latter objectives, the PRG made swift and dramatic progress; to the extent in fact, that the US government feared that this 'new dawn' in Grenada might be emulated in other small island Caribbean states.

In the economic sphere the immediate strategic objectives were as follows: to diversify production and reduce dependence on foreign capitalist markets, to rebuild the primary agriculture sector and move towards self-sufficiency in food, to reconstruct the infrastructure of the economy and to expand the state and co-operative sector. Revenue for this programme was raised via revised company taxes, new taxes on exported capital and, most importantly, through foreign aid. So successful was the government in raising the latter that total capital spending on government approved projects rose from EC $8m in 1978 to EC $67m in 1981 and economic growth altogether reached a considerable 5.5% in 1982.

Economic tasks

The most important economic achievements lay in the large programme of infrastructure development that was initiated by the PRG. This included 50 miles of new road, three new schools, an improved telephone system, an extensive electrification programme, new jetties and docks and the celebrated new airport at Point Salines. The latter would attract increased tourism and obviate the need for tourist 'overnighting' in foreign airports and avoid unwelcome dependence on hostile immigration points. Industrial projects included the creation of the Sandino Block and Tile factory and the development of agro-industry including a range of 'Spice Isle' juices and nectars from local produce to undercut the wasteful import of expensive foreign drinks. It was through such expansion in capital projects that the government was able to reduce unemployment from 55% under Gairy to 14% in 1982.

> It seems likely that a full scale 'anti-communist' purge will now be instigated.

Inevitably developments in agriculture were slower. This was not just because they depended upon infrastructure improvements, but also because of the problems, mentioned earlier, of traditionalism, individualism, under-capitalisation and lack of a marketing structure. Some immediate improvements were made with the availability of government grants and loans to small farmers through newly created National Commercial Bank and Grenada National Bank, and the setting up of the national marketing board. More fundamental changes, however, were a long term objective involving widespread re-education and the gradual introduction of new forms of work.

Popular involvement

The area where the revolution made the most visible gains and where it benefited people most immediately was in the social services which has been so neglected by Gairy and his colonial predecessors. Many villages saw electrification introduced for the first time, roads and transport services were improved, and over 30% of the population benefited from a major house repair programme. In addition to this hospital services were improved, numerous clinics and nurseries were built, and a free milk and school book subsidy scheme was introduced. Whilst under Gairy secondary education was fee-paying and limited, within five years the revolution had trebled the number of places availble and abolished school fees. Possibly the most ambitious scheme was the national in-service Teacher Training Programme NISTEP which involved the entire formerly untrained

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body of primary school teachers from Grenada, Carriacou and Petit-Martinique, in a programme of training designed to transform the neo-colonial curriculum and outmoded pedagogy of the country's schools. Irrespective of these improvements in the social wage, real wages rose by 10% in the first two years of the revolution.

Tangible benefits such as these were a constant proof to the working people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petit-Martinique that the revolution could deliver the material and social goods that it promised. However, if this progress was to be sustained and the revolution developed it could only be through the constant education and political mobilisation of the people. It was in the leadership of this that the NJM's greatest achievement lay. The roots of this process clearly go back to the mass struggles of the 70s and the close connections forged between NJM activists and the people in particular campaigns at that time. But the real flowering of mass involvement in the revolutionary movement was something that evolved after Gairy's overthrow.

The evidence of this new mass participation could be seen at all levels of the revolutionary process; in the growth of the militia and the National Youth Organisation; in the voluntary participation of youth in the important nationwide CPE literacy programme; in the Sunday work brigades which repaired roads and schools and in the National Women's Organisation whose 161 local groups increasingly put Grenadian women at the centre of their country's political stage. The evidence is there also in the vast growth of trade union membership which, along with new legislation for trade union recognition and improvement in internal union democracy, made the trade union movement a vital part of the revolutionary process.

What now?

Since the earliest days of the movement, the socialism of the NJM was characterised by its rootedness in the particular aspirations of the people and its ability to generalise these into a revolutionary and anti-imperialist consciousness amongst broad sections of activists. Although Grenada's 'new democracy' was still in the making, it had developed a level of participation and political consciousness with no comparison in the English-speaking Caribbean. Its example challenged the Caribbean orthodoxy of hand-me-down Westminster constitutions, whose 'two-seconds' electoral democracies have so often served as camouflage for puppets and tyrants; those elected, like Gairy, through fraud, or like Seiga, in Jamaica, through the intrigues of the CIA.

The murder of Bishop and other important leaders, and the American invasion, have, without doubt, dealt a crippling blow to their revolutionary movement. Not only have working class areas been bombed and key buildings destroyed, but over 1,000 Grenadians have been killed in fighting. It seems likely that a full scale 'anti-communist' purge will now be instigated whilst newly released ex-Mongoose assassins are allowed to pursue vendettas undeterred. What does give hope, however, is that the Americans have not had it all their own way. Despite their massive presence of up to 16,000 soldiers they have encountered fierce resistance from Cuban and principally Grenadian workers. This resistance is likely to continue, making the American's extended occupation increasingly unpopular both in Grenada and possibly America. In these circumstances, the New Jewel Movement, which represents the achievements of a revolution still politically alive, would continue to be a formidable and progressive force in Grenada. □

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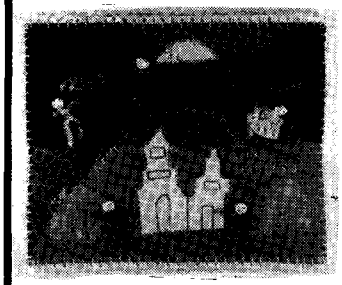

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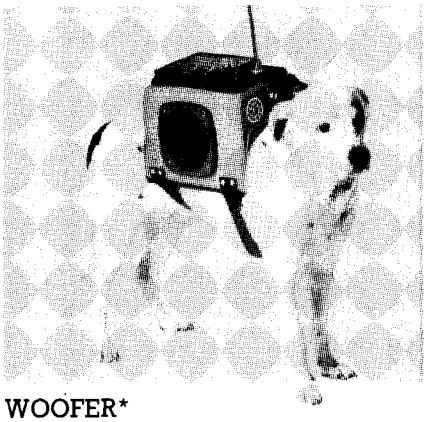

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The Right is on the offensive — and shifting to the right all the time.

Keith Dixon & Daniel Perraud

France's Resurgent Right

WHATEVER CRITERIA are used — election or bye-election results, opinion polls, manifestations of popular support, militancy etc — the Left experiment in France would now seem to be showing distinct signs of fatigue. The wear and tear of the Left has been brought into even sharper relief by the apparent self-confidence and vitality of the right wing opposition. The forces of the Right and the extreme Right have moved back on to the offensive and are undoubtedly making headway not only in purely electoral terms.

After the cantonal elections of early 1982, the municipal elections of last March were another clear warning to the Left government and to the parties which support it, despite the Left's unexpected comeback in the second ballot which prevented a right wing clean sweep. The parties of the Right won back a certain number of major towns which are now being used as power bases to obstruct government policies. Moreover, the election campaign was marked by the systematic use of emotive issues such as law and order and immigration, as electoral weapons against the Government. The Right would seem to have risen from the ashes of its historical defeat in May 1981, its liberal veneer completely burnt off. Thus it has been speculating on the gut reaction of part of the French population by conjuring up an apocalyptic vision of France on the verge of economic disaster, governed by a heterogeneous mixture of incompetent idealists (the Socialists) and totalitarian thugs (the Communists). According to the new propaganda arguments of the Right, France is in danger of being overrun by a potentially subversive immigrant population, which is presented as the major factor contributing to the so-called breakdown of law and order.

The Dreux by-election

The September by-election in the town of Dreux, after the invalidation of the local Left's narrow win in March clearly highlighted some of these more sinister developments on the Right. In particular, it illustrated the ideological and organisational *rapprochement* between the two traditional currents of the parliamentary Right, the *Rassemblement Pour la République* (RPR) and the *Union pour la Démocratie Française* (UDF) coalition, and the neo-fascistic Right represented in Dreux by the *Front National*.

The formation of a united Right coalition for the second ballot of the by-election, and the prominent place in the winning team occupied by Stirbois, the national secretary of the *Front National* constituted a major political breakthrough for the neo-fascists. This was also, in the words of Simone Veil, President of the European Assembly and one of the very few right wing personalities to protest against the alliance, a 'turning point' in the strategy of the French Right.

Until September of this year, the parliamentary Right, anxious to be seen to be respecting the anti-fascist consensus forged during the Resistance, and consolidated by the struggle against the *Organisation de l'Armée Secrète* (OAS) in the early 60s only cooperated in a more or less clandestine manner with the marginalised ultra-Right. In the case of Dreux, both the parliamentary Right parties took the risk, for electoral reasons, of breaking with this traditional political practice thereby undermining the anti-fascist consensus. A process has now been engaged in which the traditional propaganda themes of the extreme Right: racialism, ultra-nationalism, virulent anti-communism, and anti-liberalism, are bound to obtain a new and alarming political respectability. A recent spokesman for the reputedly centrist *Centre des Démocrates Sociaux* (CDS) significantly described Jean-Marie Le Pen, a former military leader of the OAS and now president of the *Front National*, as a 'good Frenchman'.

Dreux, however, has not been the only resounding victory for the Right in recent months. A series of municipal and cantonal by-elections have confirmed not only the political comeback of the Right (for example, in former Communist strongholds such as Sarcelles and Antony in the 'red suburbs' of Paris which fell to the Right in October) but also the demobilisation and growing scepticism among the Left's working class electorate. These results have been confirmed in the sphere of trade union activity by the growing influence of the so-called 'opposition' unions.

THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE FRENCH RIGHT

The rise of the Right, a trend which was already clear after only six months of Left government has been accompanied by changes in the political and ideological balance of forces within the Right. These changes cannot be seen as a mere tactical reshuffling of the personnel and the political organisations of the bourgeoisie.

In opposition, the Right has been faced with much the same choice as the Left during its period of expansion and growing influence in the 70s. On the one hand, the Right could unite around a common programme of government, with the danger of each of the partners losing part of their identity and therefore some of their support. On the other hand, each organisation of the Right could remain independent in order to maximise support among a politically heterogenous population but with the danger of inter-party strife, and bitter competition for the overall leadership of the Right. For the time being there is no immediate prospect of a common programme of the Right, and despite fine displays of unity for each electoral contest the internal power struggle remains intense.

It should, of course, be remembered that the French Right is still divided into two major political currents which, although willing to join forces in adversity, nónetheless represent two distinct fractions of the bourgeoisie. On the one hand, there is the 'national' Right, of which historical Gaullism was the clearest political expression, and which at the present time is, to a certain extent, represented by the RPR. On the other hand, there is the technocratic 'transnational' Right which dominated the 1974-1981 period of Giscardian administration, but which lacks the popular roots and poliical charisma of Gaullism. It is economistic in its vision and essentially preoccupied with the successful insertion of France as a key actor in a new world capitalist economic order. Today it is represented by the UDF coalition, which has now abandoned much of its liberal rhetoric and seems to be in search of a persuasive political vision. It has clearly been weakened by its electoral defeat in

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1981, and by the nationalisation programme implemented by the Left which has thus deprived it of much of its support within industry.

The renewal of the RPR

Given the presidentialist nature of the present French constitution, the battle between these two currents for the leadership of the opposition is of crucial importance, in that it will be a determining factor in the choice of presidential candidates for 1988. At present an unequal struggle is being waged for the position of front-runner: within the UDF coalition, former president Giscard d'Estaing, who is far from having recovered politically from his defeat in 1981, is opposed by his former prime minister, Raymond Barre, who has been trying to project the image of a no-nonsense economic expert (his supporters modestly present him as 'the best economist in France') above party or inter-party quarrels. However both these 'candidates' bear the stigma of the Right's ignominious defeat, whereas Jacques Chirac, who was an increasingly bitter critic of Giscard towards the end of his regime, and was presidential candidate against Giscard in the first ballot in 1981, undoubtedly dominates the Right political scene at the present time.

The spectacular comeback of Chirac and the RPR (many observers believed that 'Gaullism' would not recover from its defeat at the hands of Giscard in 1974) and the restructuring of the Right which this has brought about cannot be explained in the purely negative terms of the decline of the UDF coalition of Right and centre-Right parties. Certainly the UDF was founded in 1978 to provide an enlarged and better structured base of political support for Giscard, and for this reason has been directly affected by his personal defeat. Moreover the coalition is now being weakened by internal quarrels over strategy, personality clashes and resignations and has not been able to adapt its organisational structures to the tasks involved in mass political activity. Nevertheless the RPR owes *its* recovery to the fact that, already a mass party in 1981, it has since been able to adapt both its organisational structures and its propaganda in order to mobilise the most discontented strata of the population. This crucially important political phenomenon reveals a basic weakness in the Left's analysis of the right wing parties in France, and a general underestimation of the Right's ability to wage class battles, not only in the economic but also in the social and political spheres.

New Right influences

The renovation of the RPR owes much to the dynamic, if ambiguous, personality of Jacques Chirac, who has made the most of his influential position as Mayor of Paris. As opposed to the UDF, the RPR under Chirac's leadership has been able to adapt itself rapidly to both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition activities. It has consolidated its influence in several key professional organisations which have played a crucial role in contesting government policy. Thus the powerful farmers' union, the *Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles* (FNSEA) is close to the RPR, and Chirac's party has prominent members in the now very active small right wing employers' union, the *Syndicat National des Petites et Moyennes Industries* (SNPMI). The RPR is traditionally strong among the non-salaried middle strata: peasants, shopkeepers, artisans, small and medium-sized employers, but it has also been extending its influence in industry by developing its own workplace branches (*Action Ouvrière et Professionnelle*) and encouraging its militants to join the opposition unions such as the FO, the CFTC, the CGC, or the ultra-right *Confédération Syndicate Libre* (CSL).

Under the influence of the radical young 'advisers' who now surround Chirac at the head of the RPR (see later), the party has been making some surprising recent policy statements for a reputedly 'Gaullist' organisation. The 'back to the market' economic proposals contained in the RPR's programme elaborated by the Executive Committee in March 1983, are

Medical students march in Paris, April 1983.

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in marked contrast to traditional Gaullist practice of economic intervention (eg, the development of indicative planning during the 60s). Similarly, recent foreign policy statements by Chirac indicated a clear swing towards atlanticism and therefore a break with the traditional Gaullist suspicion of the US. The introduction, in vulgarised form, of some dominant new right themes, such as the superiority of western civilisation and values, and the struggle against communist totalitarianism, also indicates a significant shift in political emphasis. The new RPR is more populist and radical in its appeal (according to former RPR leader Pierre Dabezie, recruits from the ultra-right are now flocking into Chirac's organisation) and is capable of mobilising mass political support on a sometimes violent basis.

THE RIGHT IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE

During the brief honeymoon period which followed the election of Francois Mitterrand, the Right felt obliged to observe a moderate attitude in its dealings with the new government. The behaviour of the employers' associations, such as the *Conseil National du Patronat Français* (CNPF) and the *Confédération Generale des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises* (CGPME) was significant in this respect. Shortly after the victory of the Left in 1981, the newly elected leader of the CNPF, Yvon Gattaz, explained that his organisation had no intention of systematically obstructing government policy and insisted on the necessary dialogue between the employers and the new Socialist administration. Within a year, all the employers' organisations along with the professional associations of the non-salaried middle strata had entered into open conflict with the Government. Sporadic manifestations of discontent have since given way to more concerted action by the strata concerned leading to the major confrontation in May-June of this year in which medical students, doctors, chemists, farmers and policemen were involved in demonstrations against the Government.

There are of course several reasons for this apparent change in attitude. By the end of the first year of the Mitterrand-Mauroy administration and despite the turnabout in economic policy, there could be no doubt that the Left intended to continue implementing its programme: changes in fiscal policy and the modification of labour legislation, to mention only two major areas of conflict, had led to considerable discontent among employers and the middle strata. What, during the honeymoon period, would certainly have been interpreted by a majority of the population as subversive opposition to a newly elected government could, twelve months later, be presented by the largely right wing controlled media as a legitimate response to the Government's 'dogmatic' anti-capitalist options. The Right had had time to consolidate its positions among its traditional 'support-strata' and to cash in on growing discontent among social groups in which the Left was more or less absent. The fact that there was no public manifestation of popular support for the Government's policies facilitated the task for the Right, and enabled it to occupy the streets apparently uncontested.

During this first phase of the right wing comeback, the front line of attack against the Government was mainly occupied by the professional organisations of the middle strata and the employers, and by some highly active pressure groups. During this period the parties of the Right kept a low profile, although they were obviously active behind the scenes in many of the 'spontaneous' manifestations of discontent. During the mobilisation of the Catholic lobby in defence of the privileges of the private denominational schools, for example, the RPR once again displayed its capacities as a mass party, discreetly encouraging and making political capital out of the reactionary demands of a substantial minority of the population. It was not, however, until March 1983, during the campaign for the municipal elections, that the 'political' as opposed to the 'corporate' Right came back into its own.

The corporate Right

Since May 1981 the Left has thus discovered, at its own expense the strength of the corporate Right. Several influential and pugnacious organisations — in particular the CNPF and the FNSEA — have shown themselves to be quite capable of combining parliamentary or institutional lobbying with extra parliamentary pressure. Their task has been made all the easier by the already privileged position which they occupy in the national bargaining structure.

Over the last eighteen months there has been a significant increase in extra-parliamentary activity by the Right, and a number of virulent ultra-Right professional organisations have emerged onto the political scene. Thus, the SNPMI led by the ex-collaborationist Gerard Devil has substantially increased its influence among small businessmen. It came into the headlines in late October of this year when it organised a provocative mass picket to prevent delegates from entering the Socialist Party Congress. Certain forms of action adopted by these organisations have been quite literally borrowed from the Left or the ultra-Left, as became clear in May-June of this year: street demonstrations, sit-ins, campaigns of civil disobedience, strike committees, barricades, street-fighting etc. In this context the logistic help from the ultra-Right political groups cannot be underestimated: during the medical students' strike in May-June the youth organisations of the the *Parti des Forces Nouvelles* (PFN), the *Groupe Union Défense* (GUD) was extremely active in 'stewarding' demonstrations and sit-ins; the *Front National* joined forces with right wing police unions in the demonstrations of June 23 against the Justice Minister R Badinter (the Right and extreme-Right have been waging a smear campaign against Badinter since he came into office, because of his key role in prison reform, the abolition of the death penalty, and his progressive views on delinquency, law and order etc).

May-June

The discontent among employers, self-employed and much of the professions, which reached a high point in May-June of this year, should hardly have come as a surprise to the Left: not only were these the traditional bastions of right wing influence, but moreover, many of the new government's policies had attacked the material interests of these groups, or called into question their hierarchical privileges within French society. The hospital reform proposed by the Health Minister, Jack Ralite, for example, which was the immediate cause of the effervescence among the medical profession, not only aimed at phasing out private consultations within the public hospital system, but also at democratising the semi-feudal decision-making structures over which the doctors reigned uncontested.

Was there in May-June a danger of the Left government being overthrown by unconstitutional means?

Was there in May-June a danger of the Left government being overthrown by unconstitutional means? Given the putschist tradition on the French Right, the question cannot be neglected. Undoubtedly, some elements on the Right were hoping

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for a reactionary re-run of the 1968 May events with the sons and daughters of the distinguished families of the 16th *arrondissement* playing the roles of Cohn-Bendit and Geismar. Others deliberately exaggerated the extent of the agitation in order to stress the Government's inability to maintain law and order. Could a period of social agitation and growing instability, with the middle-classes leading a popular revolt against the Government,ensure the return of the Right to power? The wager was a dangerous one, and had the agitation continued it might well have boomeranged *against* the Right: as the June elections in 1968 showed, there is a strong 'legitimist' current within the French population which crosses party lines, and such a reaction could have strengthened the Left government which presented itself as defending the constitution against subversion. The fact that the repeated strikes and street demonstrations, by what were perceived as privileged groups by most of the population, were becoming increasingly unpopular and that the Government reacted firmly to what it described as the subversive activities of certain police officers probably helped to turn public opinion against the movement, and to jolt the political leaders of the parliamentary Right unwillingly back on to the road of constitutionality.

Although the most violent forms of anti-government agitation have subsided for the time being, discontent is still obviously growing. The present period (since October of this year) has been marked by the entry of the salaried middle strata into the battle against the Government's policies. The attitude of these groups (middle-income earners in industry and in the public services) is crucial to the survival of the left government. It should not be forgotten that it was the shift of these predominantly centre-Left voters towards the Socialists which ensured the defeat of Giscard in 1981. If the Left is to enlarge its social base then it must be among the salaried middle strata. However, since coming into office the Left government has implemented several reforms which have been perceived by the latter as being against their interests.

The salaried middle class

In the economic sphere, the Government has perhaps not done enough to differentiate its policies concerning these strata, and to concentrate its frontal attacks on the bourgeoisie and its immediate allies. This has undoubtedly been the result of the tremendous pressure — ideological, political and economic — built up by big business since 1981 in order to weaken the thrust of the government's anti-capitalist policies. However, there would also seem to be some ambiguity about which class alliances the Government, and the parties of the Left which compose it, are actually relying on in order to isolate and weaken capitalist resistance. This, the latest series of tax measures announced in October which are part of an austerity package devised by the centre-Left Minister of the Economy, Jacques Delors, would clearly appear to be politically counter-productive. By considerably increasing the tax burden of the very strata which the Left has to win over, Delors may be pushing them into an objective alliance with the traditionally right wing non-salaried middle strata. The success of the mass protest demonstration organised by the white-collar union, the CGC, in mid-October against the Government's fiscal policy would seem to be indicative of such a trend.

Thus the Government's successful countering of the right wing agitation this spring in no way indicates that the Left has come to terms with the full implications of the class battle which has been engaged by the opposition. The Left has shown itself to be quite unprepared for the type of situation in which it now finds itself, and has been indecisive in its response. The Socialist Party is probably incapable of mobilising mass public support for the government against the Right (despite certain mainly unsuccessful efforts by the left wing *Centre d'Etudes, de Recherche et d'Education Socialistes* (CERES) tendency to build up workplace branches, the Socialist Party remains very much geared to parliamentary and electoral activities) and, given its predominantly technocratic views on social change, it is in any case unwilling to do so. The Communist Party is certainly far more aware of what is at stake in class terms, and of the necessity of encouraging popular resistance to the right wing onslaught, but it remains weakened by its continuing electoral defeats. Militancy throughout the trade union and political Left is still at a very low ebb.

Moreover the Left is now divided on the key question of economic policy, with the CFDT and the majority of the Socialist Party defending the deflationary strategy initiated by Delors in May 1982 and consolidated in March of this year, whereas the CERES, the CGT and, to a certain extent, the PCF (which cannot afford to openly oppose Delors, because of the rule of 'governmental solidarity' which binds communist ministers to government decisions) are arguing for a return to the reflationary policies of the first 12 months with new safeguards against import penetration and international pressure on the franc. In such conditions of division and indecisiveness, the Right has forced the Government to compromise on key issues of agricultural and industrial policy, and has been relatively successful in defending the interests of big capital since the major blow of nationalisation. What is more, the rightward drift of certain government policies (for example the austerity strategy and aspects of foreign policy) has not only helped to paralyse even further left wing opinion, but also comforted the Right in that it can now persuasively argue that certain former left wing criticisms of 'belt tightening in the interests of capital' or of 'neo-colonial adventures' were either utopian or simply unfounded. Back on the offensive in the 'battle of ideas' the Right has been able to make the most of the Left's ideological inconsistencies.

The ideological renewal on the Right

One of the more paradoxical features of political life in France since 1981 is that the arrival of the Left in office and the implementation of a series of often radical policies have revealed within surprisingly large sectors of the population a hard core of conservative and right wing belief which the opposition parties have been able to make effective use of. There is no longer any stigma attached to the overt expression of right wing or ultra-right ideas. We are now a far cry from the immediate post-1968 period in which not only was it highly fashionable among intellectuals to be Marxist within a predominantly left wing culture, but also the ruling parties of the Right had been forced onto the defensive, in the ideological sphere, and felt obliged to hide their policies behind a liberal verbal facade. Since May 1981, however, not only has there been a certain blurring of the demarcation lines between the traditional Right and the ultra-Right in the sphere of party politics, but there has also been a clear rightward drift in the ideological arena.

We are now a far cry from the immediate post 1968 period in which it was highly fashionable among intellectuals to be Marxists.

This rightward drift is doubtless part of the process of radicalisation of the opposition to the present Socialist-Communist government, but it also reveals

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a longer term trend which had already begun to gather impetus before the Left victory. Throughout the 70s, at a time when Giscard was trying to project a liberal, modern public image — liberalising the abortion law, lowering the voting age to 18, introducing mild prison reforms etc — a growing group of radical young right wing intellectuals were preparing what they believed to be the necessary renovation of right wing thought. This activity was carried out within more or less informal non-party discussion groups or 'clubs' which recruited mainly on a highly elitist basis among top civil servants, university teachers, writers, journalists, etc. Their explicit objectives were to combat the hegemony of the Left in the intellectual and cultural spheres, to elaborate a persuasive and coherent critique of Marxism, to denounce 'totalitarianism' in Eastern Europe, and above all to rehabilitate right wing thought and expression and to reconstruct a coherent right wing ideology which would be uncontaminated by the social democratic consensus which many of them believed was being consolidated by Giscard.

In order to carry out their task, they sought out new intellectual sources of inspiration in the 'discoveries' of sociobiology, the philosophical positions of Popper and Hayek, the economic doctrine of Milton Friedman and the monetarists etc.

Twofold movement

By the late 1970s, there were definite signs of a twofold movement taking place within the French intelligentsia, for which the clubs of the new Right could legitimately claim some limited responsibility. As so often in France, these changes among the intellectuals were to have profound repercussions on the ideological 'balance of power' in society as a whole. On the one hand, there was a notable decline of Marxism as a dominant intellectual influence, and on the other, the ideology of anti-totalitarianism (in which communism and fascism were lumped together) had begun to make its mark. This ideology was publicly projected by a small group of self-proclaimed 'new philosophers', most of whom had started their intellectual careers as sanguinary ultra-leftists in the late 60s and had since become specialised in the systematic destruction of what they had earlier adored. Thanks to a highly effective publicity campaign (backed by heavy television coverage on influential 'cultural' programmes such as *Apostrophes*, and by support in the press, particularly of the powerful Hersant group) and to a feeble response from the Marxist Left, these once angry young *soixante-huitards* were soon creating a new fashion among the intelligentsia. Anti-totalitarianism and the virtues of dissidence became key terms in an anti-Marxist, anti-Communist backlash, comforted, it must be said, by the incapacity of both major parties of the Left to provide a persuasive critique of the reality of the socialist countries. Whereas the Socialist Party ranged itself opportunistically behind the ambiguous and potentially dangerous dogmatism of the 'new philosophers', the Communist Party, during the crucial 1978-1981 period, moved defensively back into an uncritical pro-Sovietism. Since the late 70s, the crisis on the intellectual Left has become increasingly paralysing, and the ground prepared by the 'new philosophers' is in the process of being occupied by the new Right.

The defeat of Giscard came as a godsend to the radical thinkers of the new Right: it not only called into question the 'social democratic drift' in the parties of the Right, but it also opened up new areas of intervention for the clubs. Since 1981, the clubs have grown in strength (and in number) and the ideas they once purveyed

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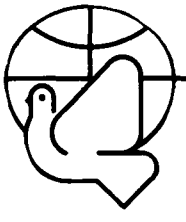

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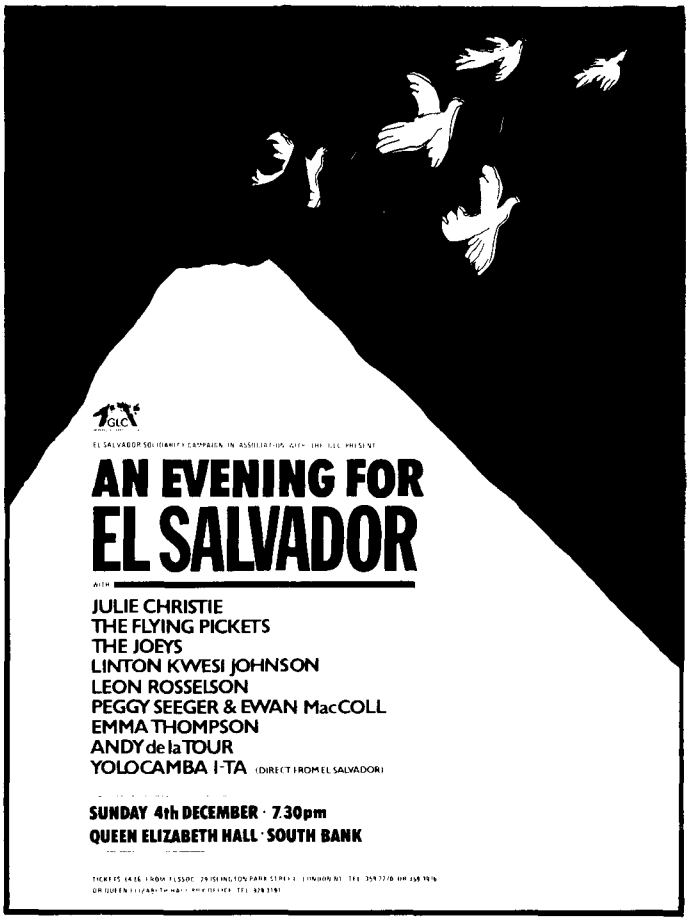

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Student protest against French Savary draft on higher education turns into a 12 hour pitched battle with riot police, Paris, May 1983.

on the fringe of the Right have been given a mass audience through the network of daily and weekly newspapers owned by Robert Hersant. In this respect, the highly successful glossy weekly *Figaro-Magazine*, which is now run by the intellectuals of the GRECE, has played a key role in popularising the notions of the new Right among the intellectual middle strata.

The links between the traditional parties of the parliamentary Right and the thinkers of the new Right have been strengthened by the rise to power of several persuasive club leaders, in particular in the RPR. Thus, for example, Alan Juppé, general secretary of the *Club 89*, dedicated to spreading the gospel of monetarism in France, is a member of the Executive Committee of the RPR and personal adviser to Chirac.

It is thus hardly surprising that in the radicalisation process which they are at present going through, the parties of the French parliamentary Right have shown increasing recourse to the pet themes of the new Right. The new ideological standpoint of the RPR is significant in this respect. As mentioned earlier, the recent policy statements of the RPR mark a break with traditional Gaullist practice and are clearly influenced by Reaganomics: attacks on the welfare state, calls for denationalisation and privatisation of public services, such as education, are all new elements in the RPR's political rhetoric. Virulent anti-sovietism and the defence of Western civilisation against the 'totalitarian' threat both on the home and foreign fronts are themes which are obviously borrowed from the fringe groups of the Right. Xenophobia and racialism have become commonplace elements in the political propaganda of both major right wing currents, in particular over the last six months.

A reversible trend

Without a doubt, the renovated Right is flourishing in the vacuum created by the Left's internal contradictions and its loss of self-confidence. The silence of the Left, or even worse the ideological compromises made by those on the Left who believe it is necessary to use right wing notions to get the Government's policies across, have tended to stress and to a certain extent to *exaggerate* the present strength of the Right. It should be remembered that the Right in France is still faced with several crucial problems. Firstly, the opposition is at present thriving on the economic difficulties of the Government, and therefore any improvement in the economic situation will necessarily undermine its positions. Secondly, radicalisation of both the major parties of the Right, although it undoubtedly corresponds to the mood of large sectors of the population, may well frighten off support from moderate centrist opinion (Simone Veil seems to have understood this which explains why she has dissociated herself from some of the more extremist developments in the last few months, but she remains relatively isolated). Thirdly, the Right is still the victim of major personality clashes between its three potential leaders, and as long as the leadership problem exists there can be no hope of a common programme, or even of a top-level policy agreement between the rival factions. Lastly, it is by no means sure that the Left will remain as demoralised and demobilised as at present.

The second ballot of the municipal elections in March showed that the left electorate is still capable of standing up and defending itself (in this case, it prevented the electoral landslide that most political observers had predicted after the first ballot). The Right is hoping to build on the impression of invincibility which it has successfully put across in public opinion: much will depend on the Left's capacity to undermine that impression. □

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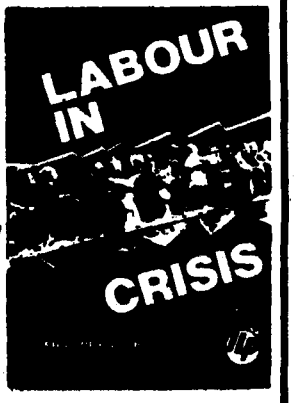

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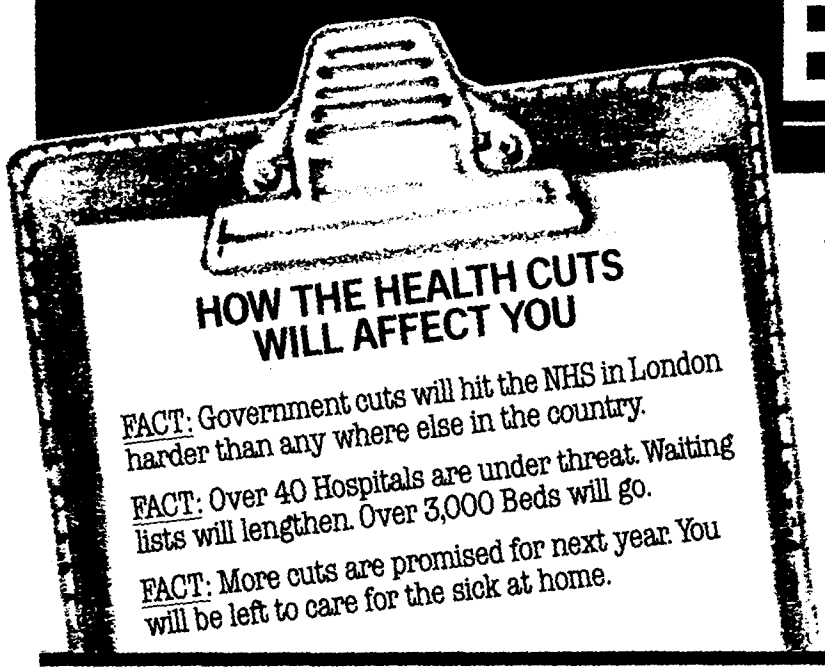

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Labour's Capital Gains:
The GLC Experience

The Labour GLC is something different. It heralds a new kind of municipal socialism.

Michael Ward

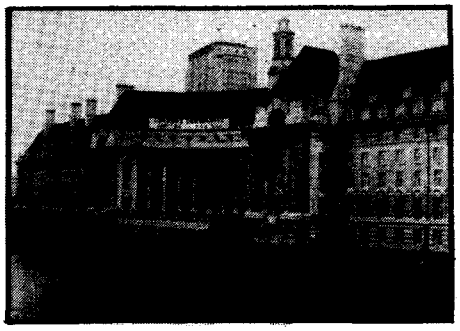
WITHIN TEN YEARS of the creation of the London County Council (LCC) in 1889, the existence of a democratic local council for London under radical control had so alarmed the Conservative Party that Lord Salisbury's government introduced a drastic curtailment of its powers. When, after 1934, Labour control of the LCC seemed permanent, another Conservative government, in 1963, created the Greater London Council, bringing within London suburban (and Conservative voting) areas. Now that the GLC itself has in turn proved an unreliable vehicle for conservative rule, yet another Conservative government proposes to abolish the GLC.

The pattern of nineteenth century urban development in London produced a city in which rich and poor neighbourhoods were sharply distinguished. Commercial pressures to replace the homes of the poor in Central London with shops, warehouses and offices drove them either into worse overcrowding or into the inner suburbs. Which suburbs they went to depended on the type of housing that existed — or was being built — in each suburb, and on its price, and on the availability of public transport.

Redistribution

This clear geographical distinction between rich and poor communities has substantial implications for a system of local government funded by the rates: a tax on property. Poor people are concentrated in areas with a low tax base, poor housing and high unemployment. They vote for politicians who promise to do something about their poverty, their housing, and their unemployment. But as long as government is purely local — the vestries before 1900, the 28 metropolitan boroughs from 1900-63, and the 32 London boroughs since 1963 — a progressive local administration can only improve the position of the poor people who elected them by taxing them more and more.

Hence the importance of a London-wide authority. The resources of the City and Westminster — and to a far less extent the outer suburbs — can be brought to bear on the problems of London's poor communities.



The first LCC, elected in 1889, was controlled by an alliance of liberals and socialists. But in 1907, after a vicious campaign, the Tories won control of the LCC and retained it until 1934. 1934 was the culmination of Herbert Morrison's long campaign to win London for Labour, by welding the essential base of inner city Labour votes to enough middle class, suburban support to succeed. Morrison's manifesto was mild in content and far from detailed: apart from the increase in housebuilding, the main pledge was to improve administration. At the time of the 1934 victory, Beatrice Webb herself said that Morrison represented 'the very quintessence of Fabianism'[1]. The manifesto does, however, contain a forthright defence of rate-borne public spending: the Labour Party 'will not agree to restrict municipal services which benefit the working and middle class for the purpose of saving the money of the wealthy.'[2]

Morrison's political project in London was not, however, only to provide London itself with good government: it was to demonstrate the Labour Party's capacity to administer and govern. As such, the continuing existence of the Labour LCC was a standing affront to Tory opinion. Morrison was always clear about this objective. As early as 1935 he said in a lecture: 'You will wonder whether I am talking about running a government or a municipality. It is a municipality, but so large that it is bound to resemble a government. I believe the London County Council is, in many ways, a model of public administration: it is clean, it is upright, and the machine works with precision, good sense and humanity. Whenever I go over Westminster Bridge I can almost hear it ticking.'[3]

Under Morrison's successors the machine ticked on until the 60s. But London Tory Party opinion was inflamed by the unbroken 30 years of Labour control. The 1963 London Government Act at once weakened the strong executive operations the LCC had developed, by transferring functions to the new, enlarged London boroughs, and, by increasing the electoral area, created scope for Conservative advance.

The GLC

The GLC created in this way was a strange institution. The social services functions of the LCC — child care and welfare — were devolved to the new London borough councils (themselves mostly amalgamations of smaller previous councils). The LCC education service was preserved, but transferred to a new Inner London Education Authority. It was the Government's intention that all the housing activities should be transferred to the borough councils, and by 1981 most housing management (though not all housebuilding) had been so transferred. The new Council was to deal with strategic planning, and the preparation of a Greater London Development Plan; with major roads; with rubbish disposal, the fire service, and flood defences; and the overall planning of housing provision. To these functions was added in 1969 responsibility for London Transport.

1964 was a good year for the Labour Party: in the first GLC elections in April that year a Labour majority was secured. The reorganisation that had been intended to secure Tory control in fact created a far more volatile political entity — Labour in 1964, 1973 and 1981, Tory in 1967, 1970 and 1977. The politics of the new authority revolved, as ever, around questions of redistribution: the attempt to use the land of outer London to provide housing for people in bad conditions in inner London: the attempt to plan, through the Greater

[1] B Wells quoted in B Donoghue and GW Jones *Herbert Morrison, Portrait of a Politician* 1973.
[2] Labour LCC Manifesto 1934.
[3] H Morrison *How the London County Council does its work* 1935.

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London Development Plan; and gradually, after 1969 when London Transport came under GLC control, the recognition of the scope that existed to support the public transport system from the GLC tax base.

The Labour GLC elected in 1973 was elected on a platform of a massive increase in house building and a radical reform of public transport — 'low flat fares leading to free fares'. It delivered on neither, partly because of pressure from the 1974-9 Labour government, and partly because it lacked the political will to do so. The failure of the 1973-7 Labour Council to fulfil either of its main promises led to an increasing gulf between the party and the Council.

THE BATTLE FOR THE LONDON LABOUR PARTY

Left wingers who decided to join the Labour Party in the late 1960s did so in spite of the record of the Wilson government, and they joined with a determination to change the party. Disgusted with government policy over the Vietnam war, fired in many cases by the enthusiasms generated by the international upsurge of student revolutionary socialism in 1968, they came to the Labour Party with immediate experience of the betrayals text books taught them to expect from social democratic leaders.

The retreat in London was not an isolated case. The Labour government elected in February 1974 also began to go back on its promises — on industrial policy, on housing and on incomes policy. The experience, both locally and nationally, contributed to the growth of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, committed to changing the internal organisation of the party, to achieving mandatory reselection of MPs and — later — the election of the party leader on a wider franchise.

The rise of the Labour Left

A series of organisational campaigns was waged in London. The first of these was to win control of the Executive Committee of the London Labour Party, controlled for most of the 1970s by the right wing under the chairmanship of Bob Mellish MP. In the early 1970s there was only a handful of left wingers on the Executive — one or two from cooperative societies, one or two trade unionists. The initial advance came in the constituency party section: from 1974 onwards, there was a steady rate of change, as leading GLC members either lost their seats or failed to be nominated for a further term by increasingly radical parties. In 1977 — two months before the Labour GLC was defeated at the polls — the Left won the chair of the Executive Committee on Mellish's retirement, and at the same time achieved a left majority.

After the winning of the executive, the next stage was the development of an effective rank and file organisation in London around local government issues. The London borough elections of 1971 and 1974 had been particularly good for the Labour Party, and in a number of boroughs new left wing councillors were elected, untrammelled by hidebound ideas on how to operate. The first organised move came in 1975, with a conference entitled 'Labour Against the Housing Cuts', called to protest both at the Labour government's restriction of funds for housebuilding, and at the Labour GLC's cuts in its own housing programme. In the summer of 1978 came the first conference organised around the group that later started the paper *London Labour Briefing*.

From that first conference developed a loose political grouping, held together by the well-produced monthly *Briefing*. Further conferences followed, and the network that emerged played a crucial role in the selection of candidates for the 1981 GLC election.

THE 1981 GLC ELECTION MANIFESTO

In the autumn of 1977 David Nicholas, the vice chairperson of the Executive, drew up a set of proposals on future manifestos. Central to the plan — which was agreed by the Executive — was the idea that the manifesto should be voted upon, in detail, by a full party conference. This was a direct product of the disillusionment felt not only with the Labour GLC but with national government too. Every detailed promise in the election manifesto was to have the mandatory force of a conference decision.

> Many different streams of socialist thought contributed to the programme of the Labour GLC.

The 1981 manifesto represented the most comprehensive attempt by the London Labour Party to outline the political role of the GLC: nothing on the same scale had been tried since the first years of the LCC. The detail of the manifesto (over 100 pages in length) was born of a twin distrust: of Labour elected representatives in power, and of the attitude of the permanent GLC officials. The experience of other administrations local and national, led to the belief that neither group could be trusted. In what follows two areas of policy — public transport, and the London economy — are examined both at the policy-making stage, and in the period of implementation after May 1981.

Public transport

From 1969, when the GLC first took over responsibility for London Transport, the fares level had preoccupied the Labour Party in London. After the shortcomings and disappointments of the 1973-77 period, the transport working party that began, from the middle of 1979, to review the policy, had two conflicting interests to balance. The constituency parties, smarting under the betrayal of the previous Labour administration, remained committed to free fares. The transport unions (and the London Labour Party works on a block vote system like that in the national Labour Party, and the Transport and General Workers Union is similarly the largest affiliate) feared the loss of bus conductors' and ticket collectors' jobs. Gradually, through the discussions of the working party, there emerged the possibility of a substantial reduction in fares — large enough to make public transport immediately more attractive. This was combined with a forthright commitment to public transport rather than to road building.

An area in which previously there had been little specific policy was the London economy. Rapidly losing its manufacturing base, with mounting levels of unemployment, London was not exempt from the slump of the late 1970s. The manifesto proposed that a Labour GLC should take responsibility for the preparation of an economic plan for London — the London Industrial Strategy and Manpower Plan — and that it should itself create the institutions to implement the plan: a training board to develop new training schemes, and an Enterprise Board to carry out the necessary programme of public sector investment in London employment.

Over the summer of 1980 the draft manifesto was circulated widely for discussion in the London labour movement. Comments and amendments came in, not only from formally affiliated organisations and constituency Labour Parties, but also from trades councils and the regional TUC. Indeed, important new

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themes were developed as a result of such contributions — such as the stress on ethnic minority communities. The commitment on the 25% fares cut drew together the previously divided transport interests, and the manifesto as a whole was unanimously endorsed by the Conference in October.

Many different streams of socialist thought contributed to the programme of the Labour GLC — the ideas as well as the political practice of the women's movement, later to be recognised by the establishment of a women's committee; the radical critique of industrial policy under the previous Labour government; and the changing approach to socialist organisation epitomised by the book *Beyond the Fragments* among them.

POWER: THE LABOUR GLC OF MAY 1981

After the election, the Labour Group proceeded at once to the implementation of its transport pledge. By the end of July, the details of the 25% fares cut were settled, the supplementary rate necessary to pay for it levied, and the instructions issued to London Transport. Even the alterations to the ticket machines were in hand. Fares came down at the start of October, and the reduction was generally welcomed.

The relationship between the GLC and London Transport is a complex one: the GLC is responsible for 'overall policy' while London Transport is responsible for 'day to day management'. London Transport is not a council department, but a separately constituted organisation, separately set up by law. The relationship was, in 1981, further complicated by changes in local government finance: the fares cut was achieved by a further subsidy from GLC rates, but the Government, while not intervening directly against the fares cut, had taken powers to deduct grant-aid from councils spending more than a stipulated limit.

Legal resistance

Throughout the election campaign, and over the summer, the fares cut had been opposed by the GLC Tories and by the Minister of Transport. They did not, however, suggest that it was illegal. This was left to the suburban, Tory, London Borough of Bromley, whose Council took to the courts to obtain a declaration that the rate increase required to pay for the fares cut was unlawful. Losing at the first stage, Bromley appealed, winning first in the Court of Appeal and then, decisively, in the House of Lords. The effects of the judgement were far-reaching. The Council, it was held, had broken its 'fiduciary duty' to the ratepayers by benefitting one group of people (users of public transport) to the detriment of the ratepayers as a whole. It was a classic case of the redistributive power of the London-wide authority.

Furthermore, it appeared that London Transport had a duty to break even: fares, it was now said, must double at once in order to comply with the law, and might well have to double again within the year.

Opinion in the Labour Group was divided: some were for refusing to implement the decisions of the Court. Others thought that, as the implication of the decision was that London Transport would have to double the fares anyhow, there was no real option in not implementing. Finally, in its budget, the Council accepted the increases. Resistance however continued, with a campaign of massive public meetings around London in the period leading up to the renewed fares increase in March. Others, without the support of the GLC Labour Group, called on individuals to withhold the increased fares and risk prosecution: a stream of court cases ensued.

Neither tactic, however, changed the situation: public support was mobilised behind the low fares policy, but the Government was unmoved. After the increase, however, a quiet, slow and painstaking campaign began, to find a way round the apparent impasse. Gradually, it emerged that a case based on the Greater London Development Plan could be established, which allowed the question of *need* for public transport services to again enter into consideration — as opposed to the narrower, financial criteria upon which the House of Lords judgement had been based. Lawyers were briefed, and the arguments put to London Transport: it seemed that fares could again be cut by 25%, bringing them back to the same level, in money terms, as had existed before the 1981 reduction. London Transport demurred — they would be delighted to see the fares go down, but did not accept that the new advice could overcome the rigours of the Lords judgement. A further court case ensued, in which the Council's view prevailed. Fares came down again in May 1983 — ironically, at the height of the general election campaign.

Mistakes

There can be little doubt that in 1981 the law — resurrection of an antiquated legal doctrine combined with a stretched and tortuous interpretation of the Transport (London) Act 1969 — was used to overturn the decision of the electorate. The GLC never set out to claim that because something had been promised at an election, and the election had been won, it was therefore legal — although the judges implied that this formed part of the case. Rather, the argument was that a common sense interpretation of the law, commonplace for the previous twelve years, was challenged by Bromley on political grounds — and that the decisions of the Court of Appeal and the House of Lords were themselves political as much as judicial decisions. Perhaps the key mistake made by the Labour GLC was in the month between the Appeal Court and the Lords decision (November/December 1981), when, assured by the lawyers that it was better not to be too conspicuous, and that it would all be all right on the night, no political campaign was waged. The subsequent political campaign may not have succeeded in forcing the Government to pass legislation to enable the 1981 low fares to be restored: it did, however, sustain the

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public support for low fares and thus help to create a climate in public opinion in which the second fares cut could pass without further challenge.

The transport campaign of early 1982 was the model for later GLC publicity campaigns. Its hallmarks were a massive and imaginative use of press advertising, and GLC production of leaflets and posters. The GLC newspaper — *The Londoner*, delivered regularly to every house in London — also carried the same message. The public meetings were called either by local action groups or by the GLC itself.

In the early months of the Labour GLC there was continual criticism of the administration — often over political issues not linked to the direct work of the GLC. But the implementation of the fares promise in October, and the subsequent court cases, led to a period of growing popularity, clearly shown by the response to the fares campaign in early 1982.

Future of London Transport

What were the weaknesses in the GLC position in the fares campaign? First, that central government did not have to do anything. They could — and did — just wait for the fares to go up. Neither the GLC nor the users of public transport had any sanction against the Government. Second, and critically, no amount of publicly funded propaganda could effectively replace a political organisation. Never was the organisational weakness of the London Labour Party so devastatingly exposed: ever vigilant to ensure the GLC was loyal to its manifesto, the party was utterly incapable of organising popular support behind that manifesto. And so, uncertainly, ambivalently, the Labour GLC acted in some way as a substitute for the party organisations.

When, after the June 1983 general election, the Government published its White Paper on the proposal to take responsibility for London Transport away from the GLC, and hand it to a nominated board of business representatives, the justification was that, under the GLC, London Transport was the victim of abrupt changes of direction. As these policy changes were the result of calculated interventions, first by the electorate and subsequently by the judiciary, it is more than a little disingenuous to present them as capricious acts by elected GLC councillors.

An economic strategy

By 1981 London had endured thirty years of deindustrialisation. London unemployment, as a result of that long period of decline and of two years of the Thatcher government, was already over 250,000. The central conclusions of the Labour election manifesto had been that there needed to be a new programme of public investment in both job creation and training, backed up by an economic plan. To carry out this programme, new institutions were proposed — an Industry and Employment Committee, staffed by an Economic Policy Group; an enterprise board, and a training board.

The GLC established its enterprise board in 1982, and in 1983/4 it has a budget of £30 million. In East London, for example, GLEB was able to purchase out of receivership Bassetts, a factory making industrial clothing. With new management, the original workforce of 60 were re-employed, and the company transformed so that, following negotiations with the Tailors and Garment Workers Union, it was effectively controlled by the workforce. Six months after GLEB's intervention, Bassetts was poised to double in size.

Where the labour movement nationally had developed the concept of the planning agreement, GLEB has developed this into the 'Enterprise Plan'. Whenever GLEB intervenes, its assistance is conditional upon joint planning between the unions involved, the management of the enterprise concerned and GLEB. The work of the enterprise board is not undertaken in isolation. The Economic Policy Group in the Council had by the autumn of 1983 produced many of the basic documents for the London Industrial Strategy — looking, sector by sector, area by area, at the prospects for future employment in London. The first comprehensive strategy is due to be finalised early in the new year. In addition, a substantial training programme has been initiated, both providing direct training places and assisting other organisations to do likewise. An industrial building programme of over a million square feet is underway, a network of cooperative development agencies has been funded, and support provided for unemployed workers organisations and for local trade union support units.

Bureaucratic resistance

This was not accomplished without a period of intense struggle with the GLC bureaucracy. Unlike other local authorities, the GLC is not primarily staffed by specialists in particular departments, but by a career service of generalist administrators.

Where the bureaucracy thought that the transport policies of the new Labour administration were wrong, but lawful, they thought that the employment proposals were not even lawful. They refused to contemplate the possibility that members of the Labour Party, not previously elected to the Council, without the benefit of their advice, had devised a programme that was perfectly capable of implementation within the existing legal framework.

Central to the manifesto proposals for implementing policy had been the creation of the Economic Policy Group, a group of staff working to the Industry and Employment Committee, working on strategy and planning, and advising on the programmes of the Enterprise Board.

Yet it took nine months to bring this in. They were, perhaps, one of the crucial innovations. In central government, interventionist agencies had been constrained by traditionalist ministries: the London proposals had grown in part from the critique of the hamstringing of the National Enterprise Board by the Department of Industry between 1974 and 1979. There was to be no equivalent of the Department of Industry in the GLC: instead, the aim was to ensure that as far as possible achievement matched intent by putting at the heart of the machine a unit whose function was to implement the policy. The fact that it took nine months to establish the team gave time for other units in the bureaucracy to play the part of the Department of Industry. During those nine months considerable progress was made with some aspects of policy — for example, a legal framework for the enterprise board was ultimately established and agreed. But until well after the Lords decision on fares, the Economic Policy Group did not exist. After February 1982 there followed a three month period of struggle within the machine before the new staff team had control over the implementation of the Council's economic programme. Much as it had resisted their arrival, the bureaucracy in the end could cope with advisers: it could sidetrack them, ignore them, and deny them sight of relevant documents. Effective implementation of policy meant having the lead.

The experience of setting out to transform a machine like the GLC, in particular in the economic area, has led many of those involved to question whether any radical administration can carry out its programmes without ensuring — as a minimum — that people who *understand* the programmes are in charge of implementing them.

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The results

By the end of 1983 the economic programme was beginning to show tangible, quantitative results: 1100 jobs created or saved by the Enterprise Board; 2000 training places assisted; space in new factories for 4000 jobs in good working conditions.

But quantitative measures are not the only relevant ones. In the first place, there is a widespread commitment on the Left to economic planning. But it is neither widely understood nor — among people at large — particularly popular. The institutions of economic planning at a national level have been remote and alienating. The industrial strategy being developed in London aims to take the concept of economic planning and break it down to an industry, a workplace, a neighbourhood and community level — planning with workforces and groups to apply existing skills and resources to the meeting of needs, the retention of existing jobs and the creation of new ones. Linked to the planning process has been the establishment of Technology Networks — resources, linked to polytechnics, where people can use research and development facilities to test and develop new products.

Second, however, the Government is committed to the free play of market forces as the dominant principle of social organisation. Each successful GLEB project, each Bassetts, is a demonstration that there can be an alternative: where the propaganda of words has failed, we must turn to the propaganda of practice. The planned use of public resources under democratic control can provide a fairer society, and a higher level of employment.

THE GLC EXPERIENCE

The consideration given above to the GLC's transport and employment programmes could be parallelled by discussions of the reestablishment of the housing programme, the efforts to introduce recruitment practices that are fair to women and to minorities, the new planning policies, the community arts policy, and many others. If this is scarcely the Labour GLC so avidly followed by the popular press, the fault lies as much with the press as with the councillors.

The distinctive contribution of the GLC and the other local councils that share a similar approach has been to reach out to groups previously excluded, not only from power but from the Left's understanding of and approach to power. The central example of this has been the encounter with the women's movement: not without conflict, the GLC, partly through the women's committee and partly through the work of other committees, has taken up the demands of the women's movement — in particular in relation to childcare — and sought to apply them. Within the GLC's work on planning and transport, there has been support for community and neighbourhood groups fighting road schemes and property development. In East London, where business interests have been seeking to convert part of the Royal Docks into an airport for executives, the GLC has worked with local groups in support of a 'People's Plan' alternative. Within the Industry and Employment work, initiatives have been taken in support of national and international trade union links. For example, the GLC has worked closely with the Communist/Socialist administration of the Val de Marne region, near Paris, and with British and French trade unionists, to develop a joint trade union organisation linking the London and Paris plants of Kodak, which face similar problems in their relationship with the American parent company. Extensive support has been given to black groups.

All this amounts to a belief in more radical forms of participation and the decentralisation of power unlike any previous approaches. Seldom articulated into a single body of thought, it represents a thread running through all the GLC's practice. Elected power is not an end in itself, but a resource, to be shared with other groups and movements, and used in

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alliance with them to achieve social change.

Weakness of the party base

But if the commitment to develop a new approach to the wielding of political power is both central and unique, it is not accompanied by a strong *party* base.

Since 1977 the voice of the party itself in London has been curiously muted. Only in the period of manifesto drafting, from 1979-80, did the Regional Executive really come into its own. Indeed, it scarcely maintained the level of authority and legitimacy that it had had under the control of the Right. For the Left on the executive has found it hard to lose the habits of opposition: for a minority to always urge its point of view by pressing a resolution is common tactic — but for a majority to simply carry resolution after resolution is to neglect the chance to shape and develop Labour in London as a coherent, disciplined political force. The Left in the London Labour Party has failed to shed the political style of an insurgent minority, and to decide on the objectives it has for the party, and to set priorities. As a result, it has weakened the potential impact of the London party.

This has considerable implications for the GLC's need to build a popular base: the language of participation is not backed up by a strong, independent political organisation — able to criticise the GLC, but also build real external political support.

Another limitation of the GLC approach is the continuing role of the GLC bureaucracy. A shortcoming of the election manifesto as much as of subsequent practice was failure to bring forward proposals for more drastic restructuring — increasing political accountability, and bringing wages in line with those paid elsewhere in the public service.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR SURVIVAL

Just two years after the election of the Labour GLC the Thatcher government was reelected with a promise to abolish the Council. Whatever popular support had been built for the GLC's work, the 1983 general election saw only 26 Labour MPs elected in London. In October a White Paper was published, outlining the mechanism of replacing the GLC — a plethora of joint boards, commissions, and residual bodies. It was, in all essentials, a return to the pre-democratic form of government in London; before the establishment of the LCC a nominated body, the Metropolitan Board of Works, had run council services from 1855-1889. In 1859 The *Times* said of it: 'The fact is, the constitution of the Board has turned out a failure. The Government has shuffled off its own responsibility upon a body which is at once incompetent and irresponsible'[4].

There are good constitutional arguments against the Government's plans. To remove public services in London from democratic control, after nearly a hundred years of direct elections, is a drastic step for a government to take simply because they do not like the politics of those who win the elections. It is likely that a bill will be introduced to cancel the 1985 elections, and to replace the present Council by nominees from the predominantly Tory London boroughs. To set aside the result of an election by passing a law is an unusual course of action. There will need to be a campaign around the simple slogan 'Hold the elections' — a demand which ought to unite a wide range of opinion. In addition, if this step was taken, London would be the only major capital city without some form of elected, city-wide authority. But the heart of the campaign must be around the services and the policies, not the institutions. The Government is not taking this step because of a dispassionate concern with the principles of public administration. They are taking it because they are outraged by the display of the London unemployment figures on the river front of County Hall, in full view of the Houses of Parliament. They are hostile to the policies of low fares public transport, job creation and economic planning, public sector housing, and support for the rights of black people and women. That distinctive GLC sytle, matched against the Government's own style, angers them.

Broad alliances

And the struggle will only be won in alliance with others fighting for more jobs, more houses, and better public transport. Cuts in the National Health Service mean the loss of 3000 jobs in London, the closure of 20 London hospitals, longer waiting lists and poorer standards of service. So Council resources are being put behind a campaign of resistance with publicity material and support for health campaigns. Privatisation of British Telecommunications would lose over 15000 London jobs — so support is being given to the Post Office Engineers. Other possibilities include the holding of open 'hearings' around the improvement of public services. A major conference for public sector users and workers is being held to fight the threat of privatisation.

The defence of the GLC as an institution can run alongside the political campaign, and considerable headway had been made even before the White paper had been published. Abolition is almost certain to cost money; ratepayers would end up paying rates to many different organisations. Most borough councils would find their residents paying higher rates for the same services. Support for arts organisations and voluntary groups would be at risk.

The campaign is also linked to the fight against current government proposals to limit council budgets. Not content with the previous 'penalty' measures, to 'fine' councils which 'overspend', the Government is now seeking powers for 'rate capping' — stipulating the maximum rate a council can levy. Most Labour Councils have been told they are 3% or 6% above target: the GLC have been told they are 34% above. Indeed, if the government succeeds on rate capping, they will scarcely need abolition as a sop to the prime minister. And therefore the GLC has established, jointly with the other councils most affected (mostly Metropolitan Councils and Districts, and London Boroughs), a group, chaired by Sheffield's David Blunkett, to fight rate capping with a campaign team concentrating on MPs, voluntary and community organisations, and the media.

The Conservative Party has always been wary of democratic institutions of London local government, and has not hesitated to move against them when they provoke Tory anger by their policies, or challenge Tory political hegemony: the Tory Party does not take lightly the political symbolism of control of the capital city. Morrison, in the passage quoted earlier, was neither the first nor the last person to compare the government of London with the government of a country. The present proposals, forming as they do but one offensive in a government-inspired war on local democracy, are simply the latest in a long series.

The Labour GLC of 1981 has inspired warm affection and provoked fierce hostility by its policies and its style. To win the abolition battle it now needs to attract wider support than voted for it in the 1981 election, wider support than that of the groups it has worked with, and wider support than it built in the fares campaign. But the prize, if it succeeds, will be a far greater victory than simply retaining democratic elections in London: it will be a victory for an alternative to the politics of the present government. The question is whether that alternative can be defined and presented in terms that will win that wider support. □

[4] *The Times* 1 Dec 1859.

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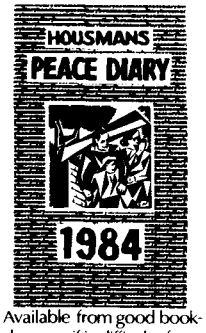

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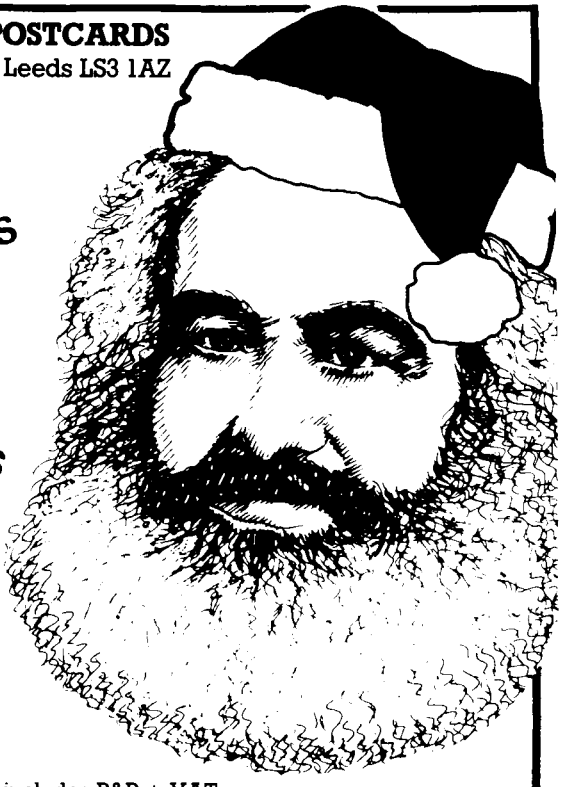

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In the August issue we published an interview with a leading representative of the Tudeh Party on the repression of Tudeh and the nature of the Khomeini regime. We continue this discussion with a different, more critical view.

Fred Halliday

Iran's Revolution Turns Sour

IN THE EARLY PART OF 1983, the regime of Ayatollah Khomeini celebrated the fourth anniversary of the Shah's fall, and of the proclamation of the Islamic Republic. Despite many predictions of its imminent collapse, Khomeini's state has remained in existence and gives every sign of having consolidated a political and social base that could ensure its survival. Yet it is at this point, of apparent stabilisation and growing self-confidence, that the Islamic rulers have decided to launch something which they had hitherto avoided, an all-out attack on Iran's communists, grouped in the Tudeh or Masses Party and in several other organisations linked to it, most noticeably the Fedayin-Majority. According to the regime, the number of Tudeh sympathisers and members came to around 10,000, of whom, by mid-May, 1,500 had been arrested. Independent and Tudeh sources give figures of 50,000 or over for members and sympathisers, and of much higher numbers arrested.[1]

A terrible blow

The first move in this campaign came in February 1983, when the leadership of the Tudeh Party was arrested and charged with spying for the USSR. Initially, a figure of around two dozen arrests was given. Regime officials suggested that members of the party who were prepared to renounce espionage could continue as a legal party. But it later became evident that something much more serious was afoot. On 4 May the Tudeh Party and its affiliates were banned, a move publicly endorsed by Khomeini. All Tudeh Party members were ordered to report to the police. A succession of party leaders, beginning with secretary-general Nureddin Kianuri, was shown on television, confessing to espionage for the USSR and calling on their followers to renounce Marxism in favour of Islam. Government officials indicated that, once they had revealed all they knew, those guilty of serious crimes would face the normal penalty — execution. They promised a public trial in which the accused would reveal what they had been doing. It seemed from the television appearances that those so presented had been tortured, and reports emerged of the seizure of Tudeh Party premises, files and documents across the country. At the same time, propaganda against the Soviet Union and communism increased. The Soviet Union was now said by some sections of the Islamic Republican regime to be a greater enemy than the USA and, on the day the Tudeh Party was banned, 18 Soviet diplomats, about half the staff of the Tehran embassy, were expelled.[2]

Whatever the scale of execution that is to follow, there is little doubt that Iran's communist party has suffered a terrible blow, from which it will take a long time to recover. Virtually all of the central committee has been arrested, and Tudeh Party members in neighbouring states, Turkey and Pakistan have also been arrested. Indeed, in comparative perspective the defeat of the Tudeh in 1983 must rank with the great debacles of the international communist movement. It is more serious, in terms of the impact on the party, than the repressions of communists in Iraq in 1949, in Egypt under Nasser, and in the Sudan in 1971. It bears, rather, comparison with Indonesia in 1965, Chile in 1973 and Germany in 1933. Yet, as in all such cases, the comparisons concern not only the level of repression visited upon the communists by a right wing regime, but also the political decisions taken by them which led to the subsequent catastrophe. Solidarity with those in Khomeini's jails cannot preclude examination of the circumstances that brought them there.

Historical background

The tragedy of the Tudeh Party, and the policies it pursued, can best be seen in the context of modern Iranian history and of the manner in which the initial hopes aroused by the Iranian revolution have been dashed. In this perspective, the events of 1983 can be seen as the third tragedy of the Iranian communist movement. The first was in 1921, when the new military regime in Tehran crushed an insurgent republic in the north of the country. The second was in 1953 when the army, backed by Britain and America, overthrew the nationalist government of Dr Mosadeq and destroyed the Tudeh's then widespread organisation. The overthrow of the Shah in 1979 appeared at first to offer the Tudeh a new opportunity: yet, four years later, it was to suffer a defeat even greater than those of 1921 and 1953.

There is little doubt that Iran's communist party has suffered a terrible blow.

Iranian communism has a long and militant history[3]. The first Iranian communists were migrant workers in the oil industry of Czarist Russia: during the 1900s many joined the Bolshevik Party and during the upheavals in Iran of 1906-8, known as the Constitutional Revolution, socialist groups played an active part. The Communist Party of Iran was founded in June 1920 — the very first communist party in Asia, established before those of China, Japan, Vietnam or India. At the famous Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East, held in September 1920, Iranian communists played a prominent role. This activity was supported by the Bolsheviks and, in the confusion prevailing in Iran at this time, the CPI was able to ally with guerrillas in the wooded Gilan hills along the Caspian Coast and proclaim a socialist republic.

Yet this early breakthrough soon fell foul of the factors that were to bedevil Iranian communists later. In Gilan itself, divisions arose between the communist and Islamic factions of the movement. The new military regime in Tehran, led by Reza Khan, the father of the last Shah, was backed by Britain and it was a priority for the new government to destroy the pro-Soviet regime in the north. On their side, the Russians were faced with the overriding need to

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make peace with Britain in order to alleviate the pressure upon their own regime, and this forced them to withdraw military support for the Gilan revolutionaries. By November 1921 the Gilan Republic had been crushed.[4]

A formidable force

The events of 1921 were followed by two decades of dictatorship under Reza Khan, and the defeat of Gilan had major consequences for the CPI. Reza Khan signed a treaty with the Bolsheviks and this allowed him to suppress the CPI throughout Iran. In 1931 all organisations professing 'collectivist' ideologies were banned. Amongst Islamic forces, the Gilan experience was used as evidence of the conflict between Muslim and communist forces — a lesson to which today's followers of Khomeini still allude. The CPI's leading cadres were in exile in the Soviet Union, where some perished in the purges, and so it was that in 1941, when the British and Soviet invasion of Iran deposed Reza Shah, it was not the Communist Party but a new formation, the Tudeh Party, that was created. This was partly to circumvent the 1931 law, under which the CPI remained illegal, and partly to present a broader image and attract sections of the population that might not have joined a communist party.

Amidst the tense economic and political conditions of the war, the Tudeh attracted a large following and by 1946 it was a formidable force. It had up to 100,000 members and close sympathisers and a trade union federation of 350,000 members. It was by far the largest organised group in Iran, the first nationwide political party in the country's history. According to the *New York Times* correspondent at that time, it would have won 40% of the vote in a free election.[5]

The Tudeh recruited from two main sectors: educated middle class people, who saw it as the bearer of modernity and enlightenment that contrasted with the pro-imperialist court and with the obscurantism of the mollahs; and industrial workers, over a quarter of party membership. The Tudeh was also the first political force in Iran to mobilise women. But, despite the advances it had made during the war, it was soon to lose ground. In 1946 two Tudeh members joined the government, in a trusting error that mirrored the overconfidence of communist parties in Europe at that time and prefigured the even greater mistake which the Tudeh was to make with Khomeini. Prisoners of their participation in government, the Tudeh was unable to prevent the government from liquidating the left wing autonomous forces in the two provinces of Azerbiajan and Kurdistan, after which the Tudeh representatives were expelled from the cabinet.

Mosadeq

With the defeats in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran, Tudeh membership began to wane: the party was losing prestige. In 1949 the Shah banned Tudeh, after an attempt on his life in which the Tudeh was allegedly implicated. The Tudeh was soon, however, able to restart semi-legal activity, but when the nationalist premier Mohammad Mosadeq came into office in 1951 and nationalised the British-owned oil industry, the Tudeh made a major mistake. In keeping with the dominant line of the communist movement at that time, which saw bourgeois nationalists such as Mosadeq, Gandhi and Nasser as class enemies, the Tudeh initially opposed the nationalist government. Mosadeq was, it was claimed, a 'slave' of America, which wanted to oust Britain from its position in Iran. By the time, in 1953, that the Tudeh Party had begun to change its policy, it was already too late. The Eisenhower administration had by now decided that Mosadeq had to be ousted. Sections of the clergy were actively opposed to Mosadeq. And the Tudeh's backing for him was lukewarm: for example, when the government tried to raise money by issuing bonds, the Tudeh told its members not to subscribe. When the coup came, in August 1953, the Tudeh was passive. It had thousands of members, and a secret network inside the military of around 600 officers. Yet the party did not try and stop the coup and it at first minimised the extent to which the military victory had altered the situation. Its members were gradually tracked down, although a small group of army personnel, led by Khosro Ruzbeh, continued armed resistance until his death in 1958. Whether Tudeh could have prevented the 1953 coup is debatable: that it damaged its political reputation for a generation by its passivity is not.

Tudeh's decline

The paralysis of 1953 reflected the party's misestimation of the forces inside Iran. It must also have reflected the reluctance of the

[1] For a Tudeh analysis of recent events see the interview with A. Sadeq in *Marxism Today*, August 1983.

[2] Material on the recent events surrounding the Tudeh is given in BBC *Summary of World Broadcasts* Part IV The Middle East. This covers both the statements of the Iranian government and the broadcasts of the Tudeh radio based in Soviet Azerbaijan, the National Voice of Iran.

[3] There are three main sources on the history of the communist movement in Iran. Sepehr Zabih *The Communist Movement in Iran* 1966 provides a general overview. Ervand Abrahamian *Iran Between Two Revolutions* 1982 gives a detailed analysis of the Tudeh Party in the 1940s and 1950s. The early history of the movement is discussed in Khosrow Shakeri *Le Parti Communiste Iranien 1916-1980* Paris 1980. Shakeri has also published in a number of volumes the writings of the early Iranian communists: see *Histoire du Mouvement Ouvrier et Révolutionnaire en Iran*, Florence 1978 and following years.

[4] On this period see my 'Revolution in Iran: was it possible in 1921?' *Khamsin* no 7 Ithaca Press 1980. The core of the argument is that the Bolsheviks were justified in aiding the communist guerrillas in northern Iran in 1919 and 1920, but that the pressure on them was such that, by 1921, they had no alternative but to withdraw this support.

[5] On this see Abrahamian, *op cit*, ch 7.

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new and untried Soviet leadership to engage in a confrontation with the USA at a time when it was seeking a thaw after the death of Stalin. But the central error was the sectarian attitude of the Tudeh to its potential allies, a replay of the Third Period sectarianism that brought the German communists to defeat in 1933. At its Fourth Plenum in 1957 the party made a partial self-criticism, but the events of 1953 took a great toll upon it. For the next quarter century, its activities were mainly in exile — publishing, running a radio station. Membership stood at around 5,000. Despite its claims to this effect, the Tudeh Party played no significant role in the revolution of 1978-9. Moreover, the Tudeh was discredited amongst a wide section of young people, who came into politics after the 1953 coup. At first, they followed Mosadeq. Later, in the 1960s, many of them turned to Maoism and strands of independent Marxism. In the 1970s, radical Islamic ideas attracted the greatest following.

The Tudeh Party's uncritical support for the USSR, even when Moscow sold military supplies to the Shah, and the ease with which on one occasion the secret police, SAVAK, infiltrated Tudeh cells antagonised an opposition movement that survived and grew despite the Shah's repression. The self-criticism which Tudeh made in 1957 did little to overcome this, particularly because on the question of its attitude to the USSR it maintained a classical pro-Soviet position. Given the lack of objective analysis of Iran's modern history, it was possible for the Tudeh's opponents, with some success, to distort the record and argue that the party had actually in some measure supported the 1953 coup, and the party's support in 1944 for a Soviet oil concession in the north of the country, to counter the British one in the south, was repeatedly used against it as an indication of its subservience to the USSR. In a perverse way, the Tudeh also fell victim to its own past successes, as well as to its failures: for there developed what can be termed a 'myth of the Tudeh', of a vast conspiratorial grouping that was evoked by royalist and Islamic forces to justify attacks upon the Left. The truth was that in the 1960s and 1970s the Tudeh enjoyed nothing like the influence which its enemies attributed to it. Yet, in the end, it was to fall victim to that myth.

Once Khomeini began to criticise the USSR the problems arose.

The 1978-9 revolution

The revolution of 1978-9 caught the Tudeh, as it did the rest of the secular Left, by surprise. Just prior to the Shah's fall there was a change of position within the party: the existing secretary-general, Iraj Eskandari, was replaced by Nureddin Kianuri, a former architect who advocated a more militant backing for Khomeini. When the Shah did fall, legal activity became possible again, and the Tudeh leaders returned to Iran. They published their paper, *Mardom* (People), and ran candidates in elections. But although they were able to recruit some young members and to re-establish contact with sympathisers of the older generation, they won no great successes. Young secular militants looked to the Fedayin guerrillas, and the majority of radical youth was won over by the Islamic currents. The one great success of the Tudeh came in 1980 when the Fedayin organisation itself divided into a Minority faction, loyal to the old independent Marxist positions and hostile to Khomeini, and a Majority, which aligned itself with the Tudeh without merging with it.

But as the political climate in Iran worsened, so it became more difficult for the Tudeh to operate, even though it professed support for the regime. In 1980 and 1981 its buildings were attacked and temporarily closed. About 14 months after the revolution of February 1979, the party stopped issuing membership cards. In March 1981 several important Central Committee members were arrested: no one ever heard from them again. In 1982 the party press was finally banned completely. Yet the Tudeh leaders still believed that they could preserve a margin of freedom, and in order to comply with the regulations governing political activity and keep their legal status they supplied the regime with lists of the names and addresses of some Tudeh leaders. It was these very lists which the Islamic Guards used to arrest the communist leadership one early morning in February 1983.

Growing repression

This four-year saga took place against a wider background of increasing repression in Iran. The Tudeh was the last, not the first, to meet such a fate. Within weeks of Khomeini coming to power, in March 1979, there were protest demonstrations about the new Islamic restrictions on women. All of the organised left parties tried to avoid a clash then. In August 1979 there were mass demonstrations in Tehran against press censorship and the denial of autonomy to the ethnic minorities, such as the Kurds. Only the socialist National Democratic Front officially supported these protests. Then in 1980 and 1981 the Islamic forces themselves began to split and in June 1981 urban guerrilla war broke out following the dismissal of Bani-Sadr as President and the open clash between the regime and the Mojahidin guerrillas backing Bani-Sadr. The Mojahidin had become increasingly critical of Khomeini but only started military opposition when their last ally in the regime, Bani-Sadr, was ousted. From 1979 onwards there had been fighting in the western mountains, between government and Kurdish forces. By mid-1981, all democratic liberties created by the revolution had been abrogated: the press was completely censored, the universities were closed, all independent workers' organisations had been broken, political opponents had been arrested in the tens of thousands and many had been tortured and shot; televised 'confessions' of political prisoners were frequent.

Throughout this period, the Tudeh and the Fedayin-Majority were the only significant secular political forces in the country not to support this growing opposition. There were those within its ranks who opposed the backing for Khomeini and the party was seriously divided; but Kianuri and his associates maintained the view that at almost any cost the Tudeh had to maintain itself as an organisation and not antagonise the regime. Why then, if the party was so supportive, did the regime attack it in early 1983? First, there had from the beginning been a conflict in foreign policy between the regime and the Tudeh. Khomeini insisted on the slogan 'Neither East nor West', while the Tudeh saw the USA as the only enemy. As long as Khomeini was concentrating his fire on the USA this was not a problem; the Tudeh supported the seizure of the US hostages. But once Khomeini began to criticise the USSR the problems arose. The Soviet intervention in support of the Afghan party in December 1979 led to one set of conflicts; the Soviet decision to begin supplying Iraq with arms in its war with Iran, a move initiated in mid-1982, was far more serious. Soviet weapons were now killing Iranians on the front.

Iran and the West

By 1982 there was a clear divergence between Tudeh and the regime on the war: the former wanted an immediate end, the latter prosecuted the campaign. A second factor was the shift within the regime itself: virulently anti-communist forces had always been present inside the Islamic regime, but it was in 1982 that they came most clearly to the fore. In parliament, three social reforms

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were blocked by these forces — land reform, the nationalisation of foreign trade, and the expropriation of exiles' property. If others had been willing to ignore or tolerate the Tudeh, these were not. Thirdly, despite its consolidation, the regime now faces great internal problems: it has done virtually nothing to improve the lot of the poor, in town or country, and the lack of progress in the war with Iraq, with its enormous costs in money and life, have to some extent sapped morale. So, just as the seizure of the US embassy in 1979 was used on that occasion to divert domestic opinion, so now another equally fictitious crisis is being used by creating a conflict with the USSR. This time, however, the hostages are Iranians, and it is most unlikely that they will be flown to freedom after 15 months in captivity.

There are those who see the attack upon the Tudeh as part of Iran's attempt to win support in the West. Tehran is known to be keen to buy more arms from the USA, something Reagan has till now refused to do officially, while tolerating private sales. Some official signs in Iran now proclaim the USSR to be a greater enemy than the USA, and trade with western countries has increased dramatically since 1980. In June 1982 a Soviet diplomat at the Tehran embassy, Vladimir Kuzichkin, defected to Britain and he is alleged to have provided British intelligence with a list of Tudeh and Soviet personnel active in Iran: some claim this list was then handed on the Iranian government by Mrs Thatcher's ministers. It is certainly true that what Khomeini is now doing internally must delight the West: but his regime has its own reasons for doing it, and, in its impact on the Arabian Peninsula and other neighbouring states, Iran still poses a great problem for the West. There has not been a CIA coup in Tehran, or a sudden, Sadat-type, rapprochement with the West. Rather, the Islamic revolution has continued to run its course, revealing an immanent repressive and anti-democratic character that was temporarily masked at the beginning.

The core of the problem lies not in speculation about Mr Kuzichkin but in analysis of the Tudeh's overall evaluation of the Iranian revolution. The Tudeh's view was that, on balance, the Islamic regime was progressive.[6] It had ousted the USA, broken ties with Israel and South Africa, destroyed CENTO, joined the Non-Aligned Movement and withdrawn troops from Oman. At home it had nationalised banks and insurance companies and promised to redistribute wealth. Kianuri and the others stressed that Khomeini should be judged on his political record, not as a religious personality. They also argued that Shi'ite Islam, the brand dominant in Iran, was inherently progressive and that given the mediaeval character of mass ideology it was inevitable for some time that the majority of the population would remain under its influence. The irony was that the great increase in the urban population brought about by the Shah's development programmes had created a popular base more open to Islamic thinking than the more restricted base upon which the Tudeh had built itself in the 1940s. The conclusion was that the Tudeh should at all costs preserve itself as an organisation and survive. This was the line that Kianuri pursued from 1979 onwards. The Tudeh was not wholly silent in the face of what was taking place in Iran. It supported the Afghan revolution and the Soviet intervention to support it, called for an end to the war with Iraq, and attacked the 'Neither East Nor West' slogan. From the latter part of 1981 onwards, it made some criticism of the regime's treatment of political opponents. But its main stress continued to be on the need for unity of all 'anti-imperialist' forces and on many occasions it supported the

[6] Examples of the positive evaluation of Khomeini by the Tudeh can be found in *MERIP Reports*, No 86 March-April 1980.

REVOLUTIONARY ISLAM IN IRAN

Zed

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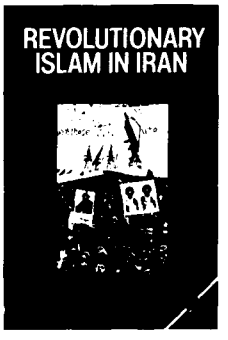
An account and analysis of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 by an observer who lived in Iran for many years and was present at the time. Suroosh Irfani places the Revolution in the context of a history of the various progressive Islamic movements (starting with the anti-British Tobacco Protest of the 1980s) which, he argues, have been inspired by a radical interpretation of Islam.



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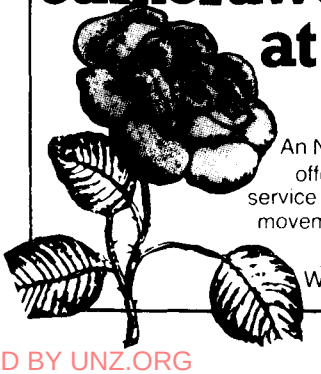

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regime's repressive acts — calling for the execution of former foreign minister Qotbzadeh, endorsing the accusations against the Mojahidin, and presenting 'liberalism' as the main enemy of the Iranian revolution.

Islamic fundamentalism

The revolution has presented no easy choices to the Iranian Left, but the Tudeh obviously made a great mistake in interpreting the intentions of the Khomeini regime: the latter caught the Tudeh in a trap which was then sprung at the most convenient moment. But the problem goes further than that, to the question of what the regime itself represents. The social basis of the regime rests on two groups: the clergy themselves, who want to control the mechanisms of the new state, and the traditional petty bourgeoisie of the cities, who favour a repressive capitalist model cemented by Islam and fuelled by oil revenues. Given the distribution of minimal services and income through the mosques, and the popularity of Khomeini as the person who overthrew the Shah, it has become possible for the regime to muster and maintain considerable support amongst the urban poor. Where these factors have proved insufficient, a terror of truly fascist proportions has been deployed.

The ideology offered by Khomeini is not neutral or progressive, but deeply and consistently reactionary, far more so than the pro-imperialist and capitalist ideology of the Shah. The Iranian revolution struck a blow at US influence in the Middle East, and mobilised the oppressed masses, but Khomeini now seeks to impose on Iran a model of government and a set of values derived from the seventh century and legitimated by reference to divine authority, interpreted by the clergy. A European socialist movement that grew out of the struggles against monarchy and the church needs to remember the elementary lessons of what something like Khomeini's policy represents, in theory and in practice. Reactionary mobilisations through religion are not unique to Iran. Khomeini has legitimised the most brutal repression of all worker and democratic groups. He has cast the female half of the population into second-class status and obscurity. He has mobilised urban youth for cruel and chauvinistic campaigns against the ethnic minorities. Khomeini not only rejects democracy in practice, but even in theory, because it challenges the authority of God: he has always been a relentless foe of socialism, communism and any ideology that challenges his fanaticism.

The most fundamental issue of all is the attitude of the Left to political Islam

The fate of the Tudeh underlines the nature of the political situation in Iran and the enduring components of that situation which any socialist organisation, whatever its choices, would have to confront. There certainly were no easy choices. While it is a country with a long history of urban and ethnic revolt, and one where enormous social tensions have been created by the Shah's modernisation programmes, Iran is also one where anti-communist sentiments have always been very strong. Any socialist movement in a country that borders the USSR has to handle the problem of demonstrating that it is independent of a country that many see as a national foe. Iran is also a country where religious and millenarian ideas have flourished for thousands of years and these provide not only an alternative but a militant and intransigent rival to secular and socialist programmes. Under the Shah's dictatorship the conditions for the growth of the religious opposition were doubly strengthened: on the one hand, the new social basis in the cities was one specifically amenable to the policies of the clergy and the traditional petty bourgeoisie; on the other, the ability of the secular parties to reach the population was reduced by the repression to which they were exposed. Only the mosque was able to function as a centre of opposition. The hostility of the Khomeini forces to socialism therefore represents not only its class interests, but also the specific strength of two ideological components of Iranian life, anti-Soviet nationalism and religious fundamentalism.

Costly errors

These objective factors cannot, however, provide a sufficient explanation of the defeat which the Tudeh experienced in the spring of 1983. For there were other elements, in the Tudeh's own choices, which brought this debacle about. First there was the sectarianism of the party, one all too reminiscent of its misguided approach to Mosadeq, and indeed one redolent of that whole Third Period factionalism that facilitated the Nazi victory in Germany in 1933. Sectarianism in Iranian politics is by no means a unique attribute of the Tudeh: the other components of the Iranian Left have demonstrated their affinity for it often enough. But the Tudeh's support for the Islamic attacks upon other sections of the Left in the period from 1979 onwards must rank with the errors of the KPD as costly errors of the international communist movement. The antagonism of other progressives in Iran towards the Tudeh also reflects a scepticism about the internal workings of the party, in particular the lack of any visible internal democracy. The other major political forces of the Left — the Fedayin and the Mojahidin — have exhibited similar authoritarian patterns of internal organisation, and, as a whole, these traditions, taken from the centralism of the communist movement and the authority patterns of religious organisation alike, have prevented the Left from posing a clear, convincing alternative to the Khomeini regime. Any successful regrouping and reconstitution of the Iranian Left needs also to involve the development of an independent position on the USSR, one that guarantees the organisational freedom and political autonomy of the Iranian Left, even as it avoids adopting a facile anti-Sovietism that would benefit the USA, and would preclude the evolution of a confident and critical interaction with the Soviet Union on issues of mutual concern.

The most fundamental issue of all posed by the Iranian revolution is the attitude of the Left to political Islam. For all that was positive in the overthrow of the Shah, it is now evident that the Islamic regime represents a force even more reactionary that the Shah's, one nearer fascism than socialism.[7] No amount of reinterpretation of the Koran or tactical accomodation to the regime's policies can obscure the deep, irresolvable contradiction between the political programmes of the socialist and Islamic fundamentalist movements. This basic, brutal, truth was known to the early Bolsheviks, and has in the intervening years been unjustifiably obscured by relativist accomodation. Yet, in both Iran and Afghanistan, it is evident that the struggle between the regressive appeals of a politics based on Islam and the progressive alternative of socialism is one that cannot be avoided. This is the deepest lesson of the tragedies of Iranian communism, in 1921, 1953 and 1983. It is one which the Islamic foes of socialism have not forgotten and which socialists would do well, calmly and with resolution, to remember too. □

[7] These points are well made and developed in Mohammad Jafar and Azar Tabari 'Iran: Islam and the struggle for socialism' *Khamsin* no 8 1981.

Protests against the imprisonment and torture of the Tudeh Party leaders and hundreds of Tudeh members, and demands for their immediate release, along with the other persecuted Iranian democrats, should be addressed to: Iranian Chargé d'Affaires, 27 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PY — Editor.

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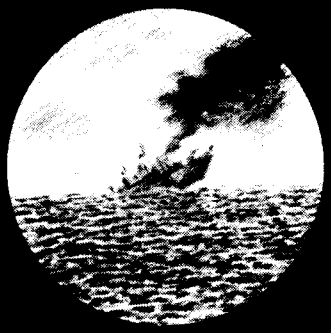

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Robert Burns
(on a thanksgiving he was at to celebrate a naval victory)

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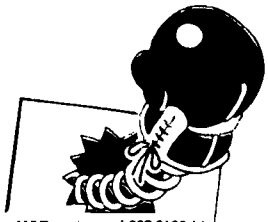

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Channel Five

STREET CREDIBILITY

Rosalind Brunt

The *Sun* front-page headline for October 21 was not a lie. But it was a total fiction. It said: 'CURSED — *Bert Tilsley dies after heart attack. — Ivy has scare in the same hospital. — Now Elsie Tanner is hit by pleurisy.*' The *Sun* assumed that its readership would immediately make their own translation from fiction to actuality to understand that: a popular *Coronation Street* actor had just died; that the performer who plays his TV wife was also ill — and so was one of the 'stars' of the show.

All that day's popular press led with the identical story, similarly headlined with reference to fictional characters and developed with inside features about the 'The Street of Sorrow/Despair' and the 'jinx' that is 'causing' the current spate of actors' illnesses and departures. These features also recalled the year's other major news stories about *Coronation Street:* 'Elsie Quits' (September) and 'The Len Fairclough Trial' (July), both of which referred to the actors in terms of familiarity with the characters they play; and the earlier 'Should Deirdre leave Ken for Mike?' debate (February) which, although based on what was happening to the *characters* in the serial, was supplemented by comparisons with the lives and opinions of the actors concerned and with readers' polls on the desired outcome.

But what is happening when a fictional world so blends with actuality that it becomes the main topic of the day's news? On one level, it has to do with the economic context of both broadcasting and the press. As a spokesman for Granada TV put it: 'We have been caught up in the circulation war at the lower end of the newspaper market. Before, they were using bingo to sell their papers. Now it's *Coronation Street.*'

But the selling-power of a serial is precisely that it adopts similar audience strategies to those of the popular press. In marketing terms the function of, say *Emmerdale Farm, Crossroads, Coronation Street* (ITV), Brookside (C4), *The Archers* (BBC R4) is that they create regular 'hooks' that encourage audiences to stay tuned to a particular channel via 'the inheritance factor'. Serials are crucial to the ratings battle and their orientation towards human interest and suspense helps maintain audience identification. So, as the popular press becomes increasingly 'entertainment-led' in its own fight for audiences, it is not surprising that it should now look to the highest-rated serial as a major source of news stories — and at present each of the tabloids has a reporter permanently assigned to the Granadaland patch where *Coronation Street* is produced.

But although this degree of systematic intensity in news coverage is a recent development, serials have always existed in the context of mass publicity, particularly as a source of feature articles in Sunday and weekend press. *Reveille*, *Titbits* and *Weekly News*, for instance, owe much of their survival to regular 'Behind the Scenes at Crossroads Motel' or 'The Real Secrets of the Street' features. The audience appeal of such stories is based on one essentialist question: 'What are they *really* like?' That is, are the real-life actors similar or dissimilar to the characters they play in the serials?

How this question is answered is usually according to the commonsense view that what is most revealing about any person's identity is their sexuality. For instance, the features on 'Bert' regularly contrasted the actor's real-life homosexuality and court appearances with his role as docile husband and 'The Street's Mr Nice Guy' and the comparison was the main 'point' of the obituary articles: 'He haunted public lavatories looking for sex partners . . . and in the dock was described as 'sad and pathetic'' (*Sun*). But with the women characters, particularly those described as 'the sexy sirens of the Street', the point is more usually to note *similarities* with the performers' so-called 'off-screen sex lives.' Hence the current interest in 'Elsie'/Pat Phoenix, encouraged by the publication of her own second volume of memoirs[1] that was serialised last month in *Women's Own*. With 'Elsie' the fiction-actuality line is further complicated with the widely-

THE Sun
BINGO
LEN AND THE WANDERING FINGERS
What Street star told the police
EXCLUSIVE CLARE'S THE GIRL FOR ME, SAYS SIMON
Coronation Street picture exclusive...Marion prepares for her big day
Rover's return of sexy Sharon
Pop go Street's saucy antics
DAY 3 OF LEN FAIRCLOUGH'S REAL INSIDE
20 LUSTY LADIES STRIPPED ME IN A LIFT
By Peter Adamson
Brian thought he had found his passport to paradise
Elsie's tuneful take-off
TOMORROW
My life of magic with the only woman I'll ever love

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disseminated account of her real-life marriage to her TV husband, and his death from alcoholism, and her present relationship with the actor who played Alf Garnett's son-in-law in *Till Death Us Do Part* and who was very badly burned after a drinking episode.

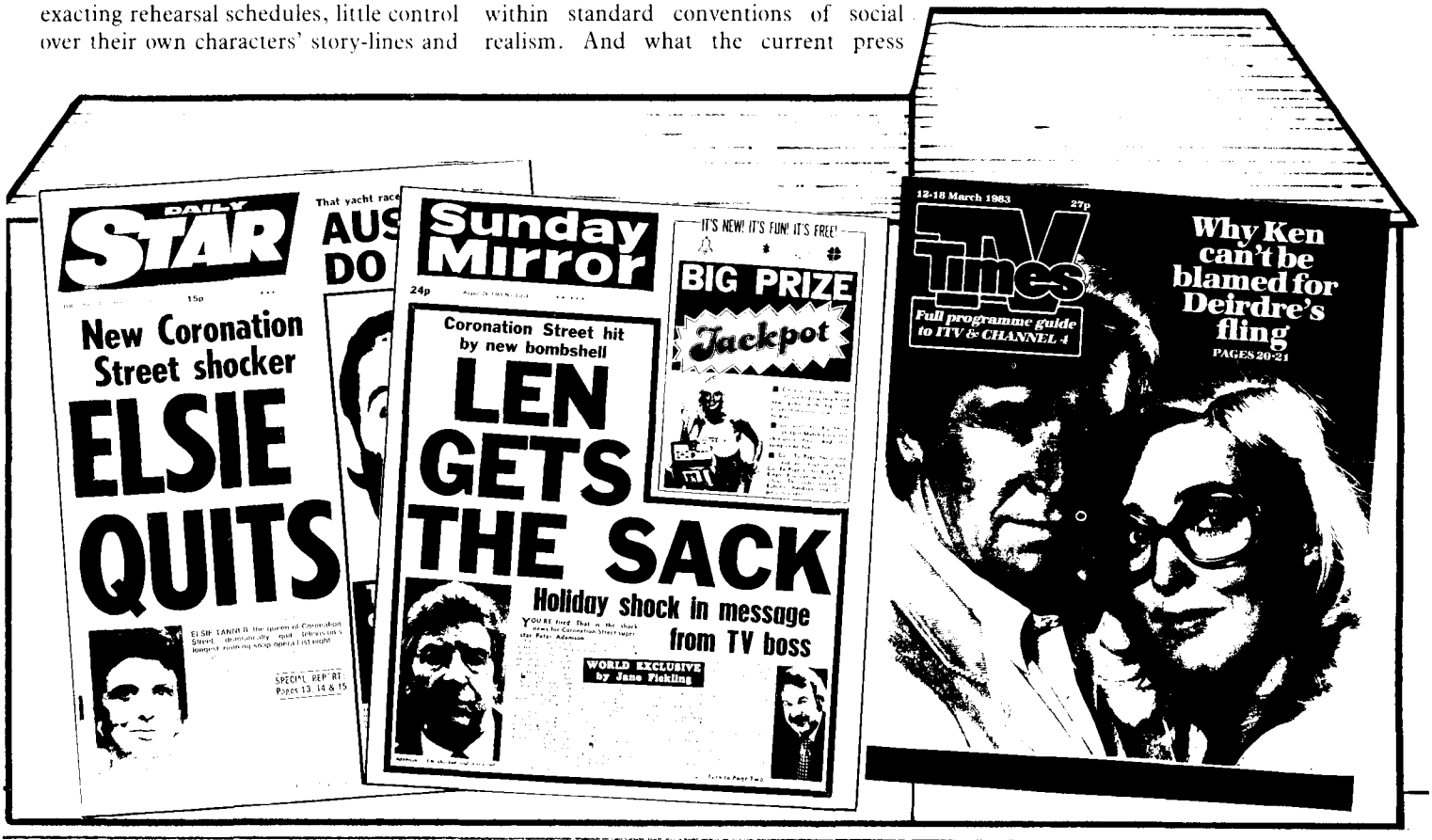
Stories like these play not only on the actor-character relationship but also work according to a public-private distinction. They are usually written in the 'confessional' mode which the Sunday press has developed most intensively. Its strategy is to turn serial actors into public media 'stars' and then, via interviews or memoirs, get them to 'confess' that their success, glamour and celebrity status is only a public show. Behind, underneath, or in private, they have suffered. Stories about *Street* actors that take this confessional form have indeed featured alcoholism, illnesses like cancer and heart disease, broken relationships and court cases to an extent that testifies all too clearly to the real pressures and strain of unremitting public exposure. Further they indicate that performing in a serial is no easy way to make a living. For while serial actors undoubtedly get more paid work than most in their profession, they work in a context of intense commodity production with exacting rehearsal schedules, little control over their own characters' story-lines and the constant anxiety of being written-out, typecast and on short-term contract.

But the purpose of press stories about the stars is not to draw attention to the real conditions of actors' working experience. On the contrary, it is to view them in terms of the abstract verities of 'human nature'. From this vantage point, the 'private' lives of serial actors are transformed into cautionary tales. They have the aim of consoling us 'ordinary people' that all successes are *really* failures, losers or sufferers. The stories can then assume punitive and voyeuristic angles — as exemplified most cruelly in the recurring feature, 'Whatever happened to Little Lucille?' which systematically catalogues the distressing post-serial life of the actor who played her. And frequently they contain warnings about the price you pay if you're not content with ordinariness — as in the long-running theme: 'Brian thought he was a star but now he's a bankrupt.'

We are encouraged by these stories to be fascinated by the stars because they are represented as '*not* like us'. At the same time we are told they are '*just* like us'. This double perspective of like-unlike is particularly problematic in the case of serial actors because the characters they play are intended to be seen as 'ordinary' and to fit within standard conventions of social realism. And what the current press interest in *Coronation Street* has latched on to most successfully is the extent to which we as audiences do tend to discuss the characters of a serial as if they are real people that we are personally acquainted with. In this sense, the serials function like gossip: the previous night's episodes is discussed in terms of what *we* would have done in a particular character's place. Hence the public interest in 'Deirdre's' story earlier this year. Sure, it was turned into a massive media hype, but the discussion it generated gave expression to real anxieties and concerns about contemporary changes in moral conduct.

But 'human interest' may just as often obscure as benefit collective concerns. Two days after 'Bert's' death, on October 23, the popular Sundays were giving as much, or more, prominence to *Street* stories as to accounts of the previous day's CND demonstration. And what price a mighty traffic hold-up — '150,000 Spread Chaos at Massive Bomb Demo' — when set against the altogether juicier fascination with 'Street Star's Secret Shame' and 'Lonely Lynne's Plea to Husband'?

[1]Pat Phoenix *Love, Curiosity, Freckles and Doubt* Arlington Books 1983



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HAPPY BIRTHDAY WEA

Trevor Blackwell

In 1924 when the Workers' Education Association was 21, its Marxist rival in the field of workers education, the Labour College Movement, sent the following birthday greeting:

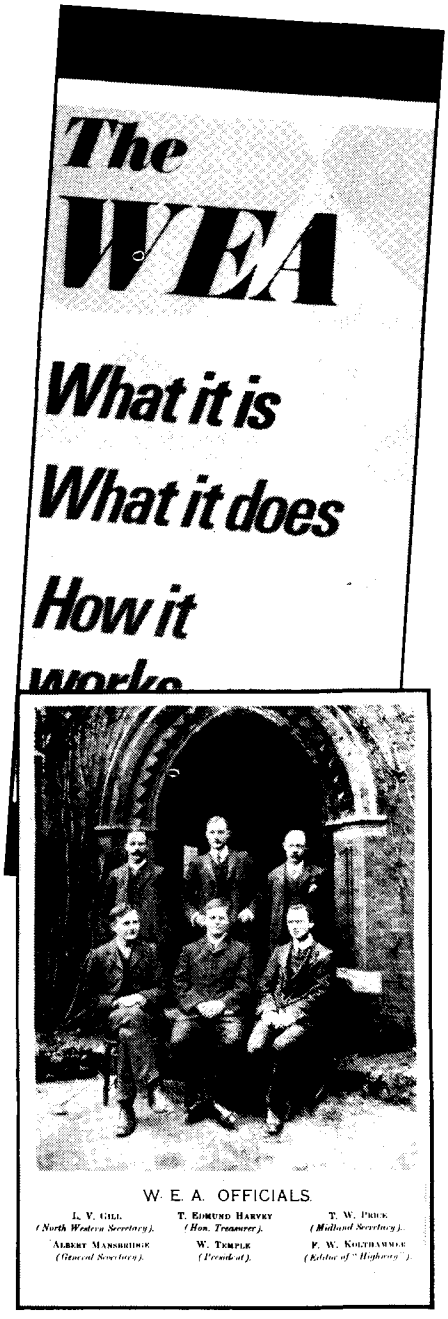
> 'It is no fault of ours that you have reached your twenty-first anniversary; we should be much happier to attend your funeral. We note with pleasure, in recent years, your decline and our rise. We hope and anticipate that when our "twenty-first" birthday comes — not so long now — we shall be able to celebrate also your complete disappearance.'

It is the Labour College Movement, however, with its network of local Labour Colleges financed by the trade unions, which has disappeared, whereas the Workers' Education Association (WEA), has lived to be 80 this year, and to see one of its ex-employees become leader of the Labour Party. How warmly should the Left join in these birthday celebrations?

The WEA claims — quite rightly — to have educated many generations of labour movement activists, and to have given tens of thousands of working people an opportunity to reflect on and grapple with the problems of their social conditions. Its work, however, in the main, has remained firmly within the parameters of 'liberal education'. Against the Labour College Movement, which accused it of teaching a false history and economics which ignored the centrality of class struggle, the WEA claimed to be 'impartial' in its education, to be 'above' the class struggle, to be teaching its students '*how* to think not *what* to think'. The WEA developed close links with the universities — especially Oxford — and preached the power of education to transform and sweep away the class divisions of British society, divisions which it saw as rooted merely in ignorance and prejudice.

It seldom questioned either the content or the form of the education which it was 'making available' to the working class. For all its talk of equality between the scholar and the worker, between the teacher and the student, it was embarrassingly deferential to university culture and learning. And whilst stressing the need to see 'every point of view' represented in its liberal discussions, the WEA was careful to steer its communist and left wing tutors away from trade union work and to rusticate them in seaside towns and country villages. The WEA always knew that this 'internal policing' was the price it had to pay for its government grant.

But there were honourable exceptions to this pattern. There were WEA districts where a much more radical tradition of workers' education was developed and fought through; districts which rejected their Founders' aim of 'spiritualising' the working class; districts where 'liberal education' was rejected in favour of an 'education for social emancipation' which saw some subjects as more relevant to working class needs. In this context flower-arranging and economics were *not* equally important. This diversity within the WEA was made possible by its federal structure, by the jealously-guarded independence of the district and the branch. As long as each branch could arrange its own programme and select its own tutors, spaces for creative and radical development were always possible. And it is this 'relative autonomy' of the branch which has made possible some of the most creative developments of the past ten years, in particular the spectacular growth of women's studies, the burgeoning of local history groups, and the development of the 'workshop' as a different educational form.



Women's studies has been the WEA's great success story, coming from almost nothing to the largest area of study in the past ten years. Far from accepting the traditional WEA moan that 'all our classes are full of housewives', tutors and organisers have encouraged the development of 'women only' classes (though this principle is still contested) which have generated immense enthusiasm and commitment. Together with the development of the 'workshop' principle — the idea that members of the class actually know something which it is valuable to share, the idea that knowledge is something to be produced, not just consumed — the spread of feminist ideas has begun to give fresh substance to the idea of student democracy in the WEA. This can be seen both in the autonomy of the class in defining its own needs and in obtaining the tutor it wants — with or without academic qualifications — and in the attempt to find more equal ways of approaching and sharing knowledge within the class. These methods of work raise difficult and sometimes painful questions about the kinds of inequalities that exist in the educational process, about the power relations of teaching and studying.

But the achievements of the past ten years — the results of these long and sometimes bitter struggles — remain provisional. Struggles which have been all but won in inner-city branches are only beginning in the suburbs. And many of these innovations are only protected from even sharper attack by the tradition of branch autonomy. What the WEA now needs to do is to generalise the 'best practice' of its more radical members and

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tutors, and to allow these new departures and rediscoveries to challenge its own central power structure, rather than merely permitting them as local eccentricities.

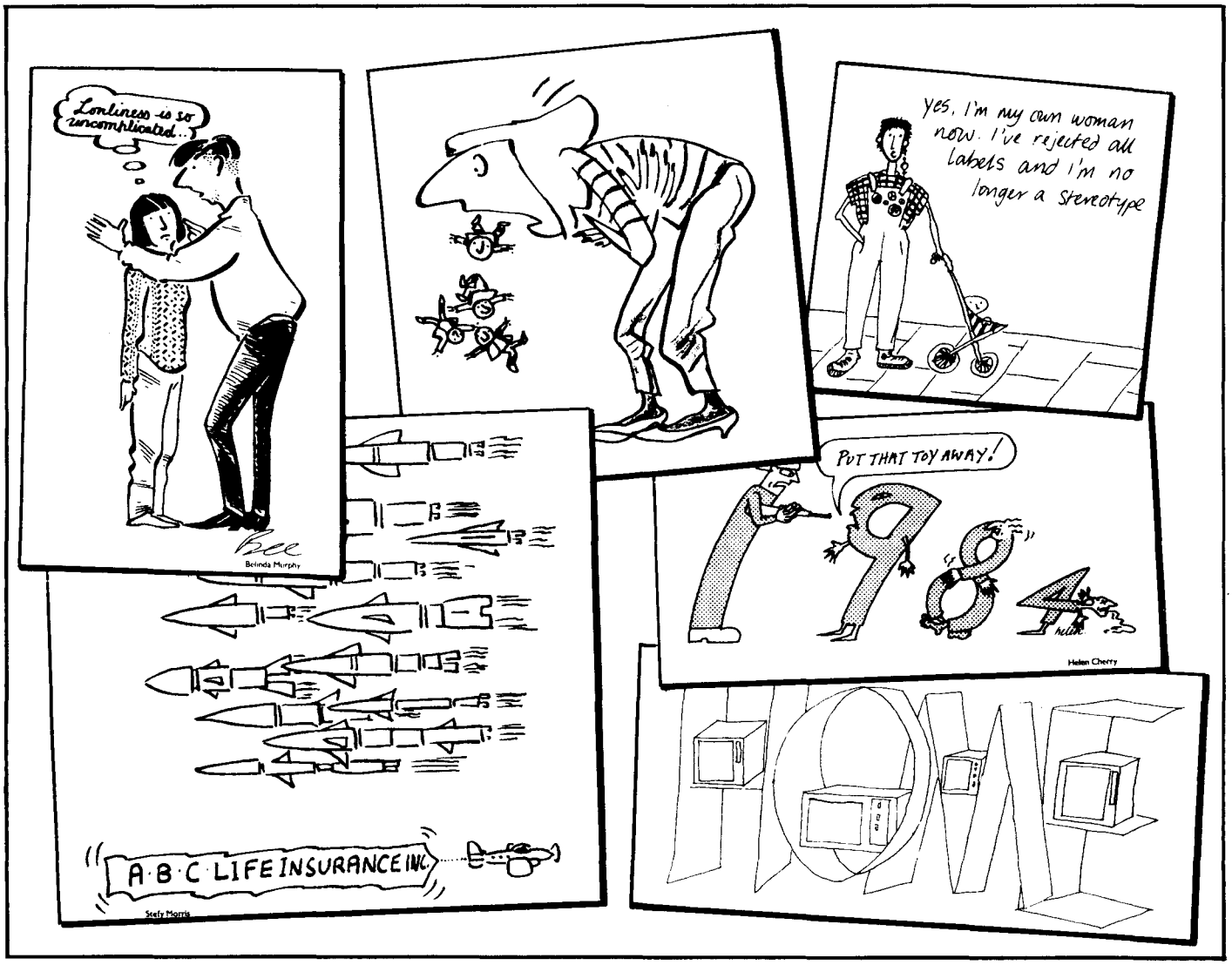
The WEA's current financial crisis — the DES has just slashed £40,000 from its budget — makes this process more difficult, but, perhaps, more necessary. And the WEA's principled refusal to accept MSC money on the government's terms suggests an increasing sensitivity to the importance of educational forms and practices.

This process has implications for the Labour Party, too. The Labour Party has always felt it had a special relationship with the WEA — indeed some members have seen the Association as the educational organisation of the Party. Whether or not the WEA has seen itself in this role, the Labour Party has certainly used the existence of the Association as an excuse for its failure to develop its own educational institutions. In looking for a model of education for renewal the Labour Party needs both to import and develop the best radical practices of the WEA, and to re-examine the strengths and the weaknesses of the Labour College Movement. This seems a worthwhile aim for an ex-WEA tutor, and a more than sufficient cause for unstinted rejoicing at the WEA's 85th birthday celebrations.

WOMEN DRAW 1984

Women Draw 1984 is a compilation of the work of 66 international artists published by The Women's Press this month. The collection is the result of the enormous response to an invitation sent out through the press to women artists to set down their hopes, fears and fantasies for the coming year. Whether or not the editors have managed to unearth another Posy Simmonds (familiar to *Guardian* readers) or Claire Bretécher (of the *New Statesman*) remains yet to be seen. The book, however, provides an interesting insight into the range of issues confronting women today.

Women Draw 1984, edited by Paula Youens and Suzanne Perkins, The Women's Press, £2.95 pbk, ISBN 0-7043-3919-6


Loneliness is so uncomplicated...
Belinda Murphy
yes, I'm my own woman now. I've rejected all labels and I'm no longer a stereotype
PUT THAT TOY AWAY!
Helen Cherry
A·B·C LIFE INSURANCE INC.
Stefy Morris

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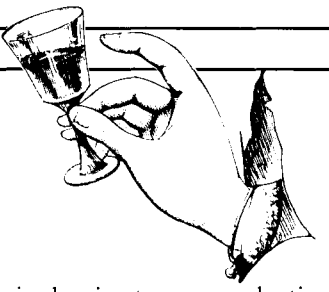
Channel Five

Spotlight

CHRISTMAS WINES

Edmund Penning-Rowsell



Few of us in Britain drink wines regularly, so we usually think of even the least expensive Christmas bottle as a costly luxury. But compared with what we pay for other consumables, wine still remains remarkably inexpensive, except at the higher levels where other considerations such as investment and speculation apply. So while the pound of 1970 is now worth only 25p in purchasing power, we can still buy wine for less than £2 a bottle in spite of the duty and the 15% VAT.

Wine *would* cost less over here if one of the baits held out to us as an inducement to join the EEC — namely that duties would be eliminated and we would drink wine roughly as cheaply as the French and the Italians — had been genuine. For although custom duties were cut, excise duties were raised and we now pay as much as 85p on a 75 cl. bottle. There are several reasons why, in spite these duties, wine remains reasonably cheap. To a degree, it is a result of over-production as mirrored in the EEC wine lake and the very large distillation programmes carried out both in France and Italy. If taxes were lower, the demand would surely be a good deal larger and would assist the many thousands of growers of fairly basic, but decent wines such as appellation contrôlée Bordeaux Rouge, of which over 1.8m hl were produced last year but whose unprofitable price of 4,000 francs a tonneau (1200 bottles) has not risen for three years. However, the duty we pay in Britain is exactly the same whatever the quality of the wine, so it is clear that, up to a certain limit, we receive better value the higher the proportion of the retail price accounted for by the wine. It is only the VAT which increases with the rise in the final price, thus making the quality of the wine proportionately higher.

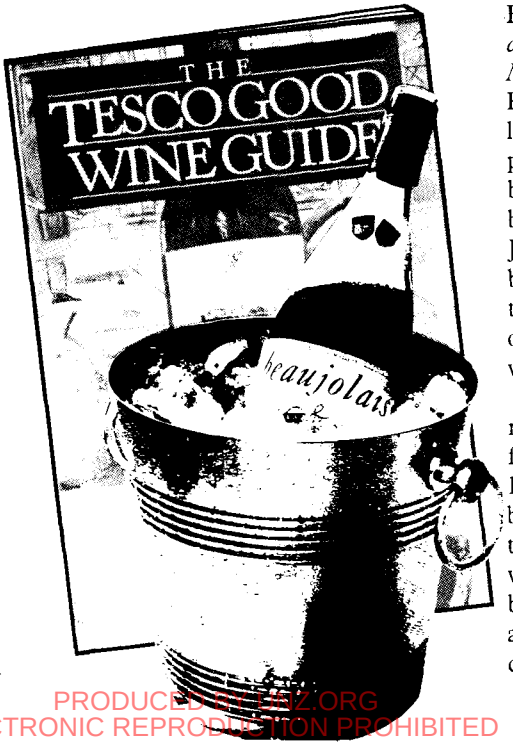
The relatively low price of wine in Britain is also the result of competition from countries that, in the past, paid little or no attention to exporting wines — countries such as those in Central and Eastern Europe, Argentina, Chile and the 'new' producers like Australia, New Zealand and California (although they have long been producers). Even Canada would now like a foot in the wine shop's door over here.

It wasn't until the 60s when wine licences ceased to be hard to obtain and resale price maintenance was banned, that the brewers and chain stores 'discovered' wine.

Since then, the rapidly expanding consumers' market led to the remarkable success of the High Street wine outlets, with Sainsbury's now claiming to be the biggest wine merchant, with some 15% of the trade. And while the convenience of buying wine in the High Street is undeniable, it must be borne in mind that price, allied with rapid turnover, must be a determining factor in selection and that this factor applies far less to the 'traditional' merchants of wine. This case is exemplified by looking at the vintage wines, for whereas the traditional merchant would be inclined to buy as soon as the latest vintage is available to trade buyers, the High Street grocers can only select those wines available that are mature enough for immediate sale. So the advantage here lies with the traditional merchant.

So what are the best recommendations for the consumer of wine over the Christmas and New Year period?

For aperitif *champagne* is the best but is undeniably expensive. Alternatively, *Sparkling Saumur*, at about half the price (£4 – £4.50) is commendable, and the *Crémant de Loire* from the same source at a little more, is crisper, and lighter. But the best value aperitif is certainly sherry,



underpriced owing to over-production and a weak market. A dry Fino (£2.50 – £3) 'cleans' the palate before a meal while the sweeter ones tend to cloy it; all sherries, however, keep well for at least a week if re-stoppered after opening.

Any choice of dry white wines to accompany the meal would be bound to include the *Muscadet*, Bulgarian *Chardonnay*, *Mâcon Villages*, *Sauvignon* from the Loire, Bordeaux, Graves, or Alsace (preferably *Riesling*), Yugoslav *Riesling*, dry *Moselle* and one of the cheaper Californian whites. Higher up the price scale would come the *Pouilly Fuissé* and vintage *Chablis*. The huge variety of red wines available present even more of a problem though the best value probably are the *Côtes du Rhône* and the Spanish *Riojas*. Among the Italians *Chianti* and *Valpolicella* are obvious choices but it is still worth paying a little more to ensure quality; the same applies to *Châteauneuf-du-Pape*. Burgundy is dear, but goes particularly well with festive foods: *Rully*, *Givry* and *Mercurey* from the Côte Chalonnaise cost less than the Côte d'Ors, but a good Cote de Beaune Villages at around £6 is likely to be fuller and rounder.

For dessert, but not with the Christmas pudding, the finest accompaniment is *Sauternes*. This is inevitably expensive and very attractive cheaper alternatives are the Bordeaux *Cérons*, *Loupiac* and *Ste-Croix-du- Mont*, *Monbazillac* from Bergerac, *Muscat-de-Blaumes-de-Venise* from the Rhône, and the luscious Austrian Burgenland wines. Finally, port is reasonably priced, but for Christmas it is well worth buying a fine Tawny (c £7) which tends to be lighter and dryer than vintage varieties. Just one word of warning, though, do not buy a much cheaper port since the fine tawny colour will no doubt have been obtained by mixing young white wine with red.

This Christmas the most likely claret, red burgundy and red Rhônes vintages for drinking now will be those from years 1976 and 1979 and my short advice is to buy as high as can be afforded. But be sure to buy early for the choice is sure to be wider until that week of panic buying just before Christmas. The table wines will also benefit from a rest before the corks are drawn on the 25th.

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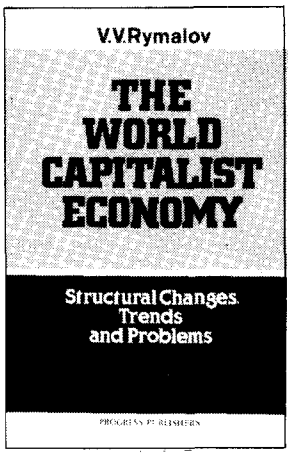
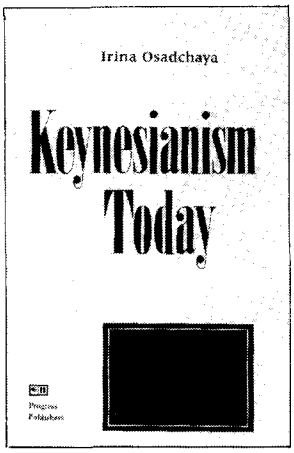
CENTRAL BOOKS

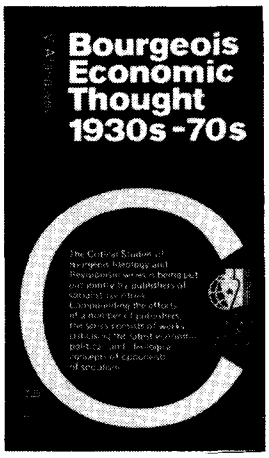
All these titles available from Central Books, 37 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.



THE WORLD CAPITALIST ECONOMY
V. V. Rymalov
Progress £4.50 hbk
A detailed study of key trends and developments in the postwar economies of capitalist and developing countries, especially focused on the growth of the productive forces, the structure of the location and internationalisation of production in today's world economy.



KEYNESIANISM TODAY A Critique of Theory and Economic Policy
Irina Osadchaya
Progress £3.95
The author has substantially rewritten 'From Keynes to Neoclassical Synthesis', adding a critique of monetarist theories of economic instability springing from neoclassical premises.



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An in-depth analysis of Keynes and other theories of macro-analysis, revealing how they fail to provide a scientific explanation of how the capitalist economy functions or provide practical ideas on how to regulate the economy.

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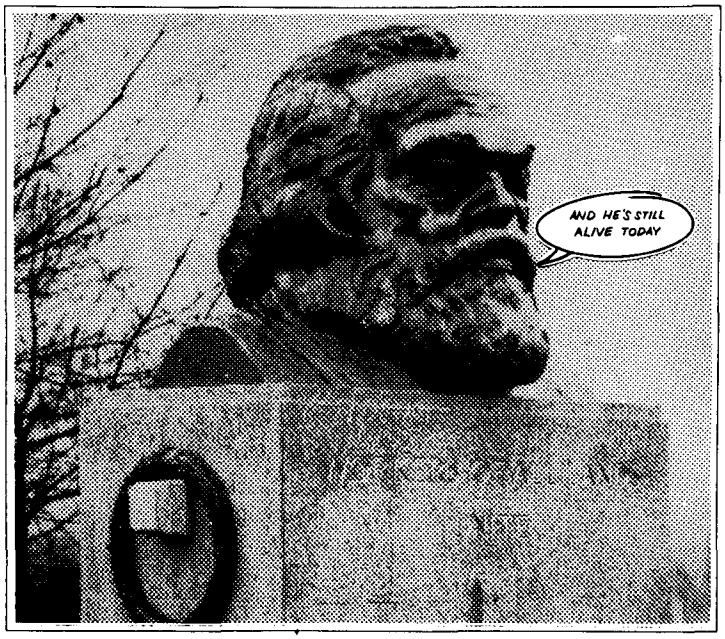
A fascinating and highly controversial account of gold and its problems as a monetary metal: the working of the gold standard and its place in the international monetary system in a period of world capitalist crisis.

Karl Marx died one hundred years ago...



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Political Writings:
EDITED BY DAVID FERNBACH
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The First International and After

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MARX FOR CHRISTMAS

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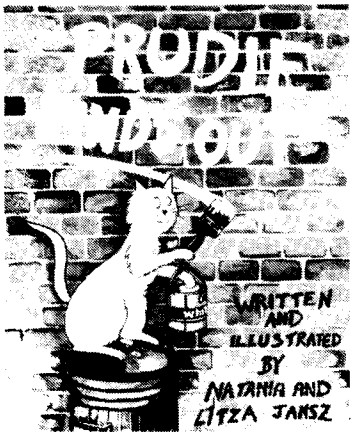
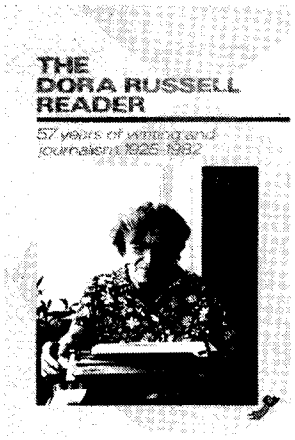
REVIEWS

With Christmas approaching, we asked a number of people from different fields to tell us which book they had most enjoyed this year.

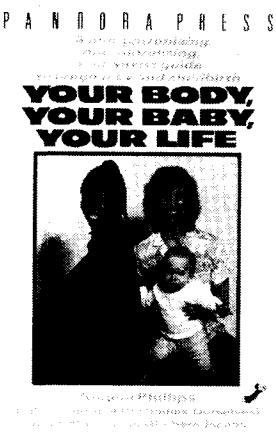
SUBVERSIVE STOCKING-FILLERS FOR RELUCTANT RELATIVES



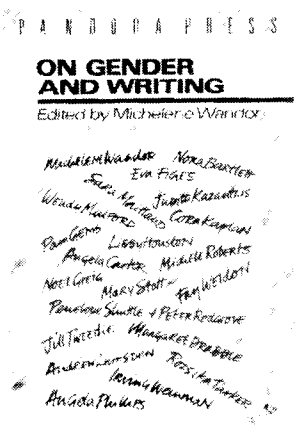
PRUDIE FINDS OUT
Natania and Litza Jancz
Tradition's always had it that
A cats place is on the mat
We won't let them keep us there
A cats place is everywhere.
A feminist parable for children of all ages (6? 36?)
£3.50 Hardback large format picture book.



THE DORA RUSSELL READER
57 years of writing and journalism from this tireless campaigner for feminism, socialism and peace.
Paperback £3.95



YOUR BODY, YOUR BABY, YOUR LIFE
Angela Phillips (U.K. co-editor of *Our Bodies, Ourselves)*
At last, a feminist guide to the panics and pleasures of pregnancy, birth and new parenthood.
Paperback £3.95



ON GENDER AND WRITING
edited by Michelene Wandor
For writers, prospective writers and anyone who loves reading: a thought provoking enquiry, by twenty-two practitioners of the craft, into the relationship between the sex of the writer and what they write.
Alison Hennegan · Margaret Drabble · Jill Tweedie · Angela Carter · Noel Greig and many more.
Paperback £3.95

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INTERVIEWS WITH MASTER PHOTOGRAPHERS

James Danziger and Barnaby Conrad III
Paddington Press

Photographers are like most people. Every now and again they need some inspiration or encouragement. With this in mind I started reading *Interviews with Master Photographers* by James Danziger and Barnaby Conrad III.

The interviews are about people and how they approach their work. Photographers like Yosuf Karsh and Snowdon feature alongside Arnold Newman and Brett Weston. But the photographer who made me think in a fresh way about photography was Imogen Cunningham. She was born in 1883 and first started work printing on platium paper the Indian pictures of Edward S Curtis. Later she opened a portrait studio in Seattle photographing in a romantic soft focus style. She married in 1915 and, restricted by the responsibilities of marriage, her photography became directed towards the plant forms around her house. She later divorced her husband and returned to portraiture and nudes.

When asked how she dealt with criticism of her work she replied: 'If anyone I ever photographed disliked my work I'd throw it in the waste basket in front of them and say nothing. I will not defend anything. . . . Wait a hundred years. You'll never hear of me then. The scene will be relieved of one object more'. I know this not to be true of Imogen Cunningham, as she will be remembered for along time especially for her attitude at the age of 93 when asked for her favourite photograph. She replied, 'The one I'm going to take tomorrow'.

Eamonn McCabe, photographer

THE COUNTRY BETWEEN US

Carolyn Forché
Harper and Rowe

The Country Between Us is rare reading, a truly political poetry that refuses the glib and mandatory separation of private from public upon which so much contemporary verse writing is predicated. Eight extraordinary poems in this slender volume recover the author's three years in El Salvador: death squads, dismemberments, tortures, US complicity, peasant endurance, revolutionary courage, all memorably imaged in language as natural as breathing.

> 'The colonel returned with a sack used to bring groceries home. He spilled many human ears on the table. They were like dried peach halves. There is no other way to say this. He took one of them in his hands, dropped it into a water glass. It came alive there. I am tired of fooling around he said. As for the rights of anyone, tell your people they can go fuck themselves. He swept the ears to the floor with his arm and held the last of his wine in the air. Something for your poets, no? he said. Some of the ears on the floor caught this scrap of his voice. Some of the ears on the floor were pressed to the ground.'

This is not easy reading. In *Return*, addressing a friend in Los Angeles who has given up the struggle, she addresses to all first world activists who fall to whining about impotence:

> 'Your problem is not your life as it is in America, not that your hands, as you tell me, are tied to do something. It is that you were born to an island of greed and grace where you have this sense of yourself as apart from others. It is

TO BUILD JERUSALEM

'Probably the best pictorial essay on working class life ever produced' *Yorkshire Miner*

'Reminds backsliders why the Welfare State came about' *Guardian*

'This book will spark off interest and encourage study beyond its pages' *Tribune*

This book is easily the most expertly presented and richly chronicled record of its subject' *Arts Review*

John Gorman's much acclaimed photographic remembrance of working class life 1875-1950 is now reprinted and available in hardback only from the publisher Scorpion Books Ltd 377 High Street, London E15 4QZ. Price £12.95 plus £1.80 post and packing.

The paperback is available from the publisher at £6.95 plus £1.65 p & p or from any good bookshop.

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not your right to feel powerless. Better
people than you were powerless.
You have not returned to your country,
but to a life you never left.'

There is something of Akhmatova here, something of Neruda. And there is something of a new original and ancient voice for which, as for the Haida Indians of North America, the verb to breathe and the verb to make poetry are the same world. Good news in a grim year.

Trevor Griffiths, playwright

WILL OF IRON
Gerard Melia
Longman

The working class hero found little place in books published for children and young people until the 60s, but authors are showing a growing confidence and skill. *Will of Iron* by Gerard Melia, is about the childhood and youth of Will Thorne who battled his way (literally) through poverty, illiteracy and the brutality of the employers of the unskilled, to become union leader and MP. Done with humour and sympathy as a play-script with short sharp memorable scenes which can be acted out easily in class, this is highly readable. It's published by Longman in their Knockout series — intended for reluctant readers. That, some 80 years after his first Parliamentary efforts for working class education, should give the ghost of Will Thorne a grim smile.

Bob Leeson, author

THE JUNGLE
Upton Sinclair
Penguin

The place of fiction in catalysing political change is rarely emphasised. The impact of a powerful narrative, based on well researched material, can often reach people who would not conceive of opening a book on political theory. It is therefore somewhat to my shame that I was unaware of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* before this year. We who fight today's inequalities still have giants to battle with but they are dwarfs compared to the tyrants of 80 years ago. Chicago of the previous century exploited the poor and the weak — particularly the immigrants to whom the USA had been presented as a haven of idealism — systematically and devastatingly. Upton Sinclair's passionate tale of the exploitation of a Lithuanian immigrant and his family, and the cynical flouting of even the meagre regulations that then existed in the huge meat stockyards is the kind of book that one devours and yet is frightened to turn the page for fear of the next hammer blow.

The impact of *The Jungle* was immense. Upton Sinclair lived long enough to see the transformation of the meat trade and a substantial clearing-up of political and union abuses. He deserved his recognition.

Michael Meadowcroft, Liberal MP

'FORWARD EVER!' 3 YEARS OF THE GRENADIAN REVOLUTION.
Speeches of Maurice Bishop
Pathfinder Press

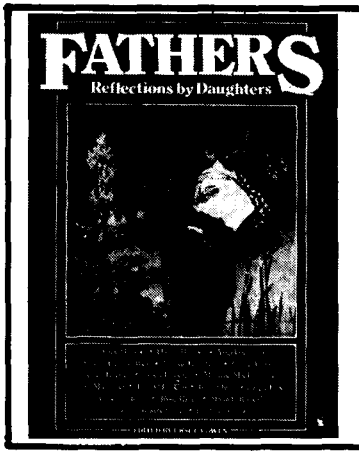
Well, the psychological torture applied by the Pentagon to the New Jewel Movement produced the sudden loss of nerve (if not the collapse of morale) intended. Meanwhile, BBC TV's *News* blends smoothly into the 'Great White Warrior Rescues The Natives From Themselves And Saves Civilisation As We Know It' movies which envelopes it. (Where is the Deerhunter Soap Opera being filmed *this* week? Guatemala? Zaire? Pakistan? East Timor?)

But history needn't only be the propaganda of the Top Dog: the New

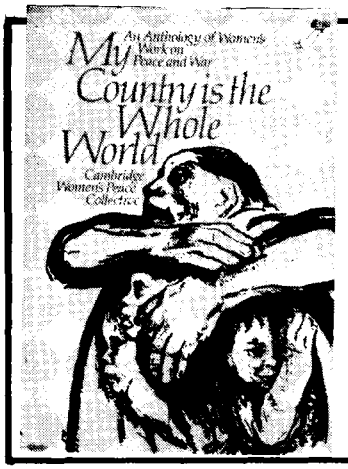
The Women's Press
124 Shoreditch High Street, London E1 6JE
Tel: 01-729 5257

Sex and Love (eds Cartledge & Ryan) £4.95
In the Pink (Raving Beauties) £2.95
Right Wing Women (Dworkin) £4.95
52% (Barbara Rogers) £4.50
Women Draw 1984 £2.95

presents for you and your friends!



FATHERS
Reflections on daughters
Virago £5.50pbk
A collage of memoirs and polemics, stories and poems. A fascinating and intensely personal look at the bond between father and daughter. Edited by Ursula Owen.



MY COUNTRY IS THE WHOLE WORLD
Cambridge Women's Peace Collective
A compendium of pictures and quotations from 2,500 years of women's responses to war. A book to give as a gift, to read aloud from, to teach from, *My Country is the Whole World* is both a resource and an inspiration for today's action against war and for peace.
Paperback £4.95

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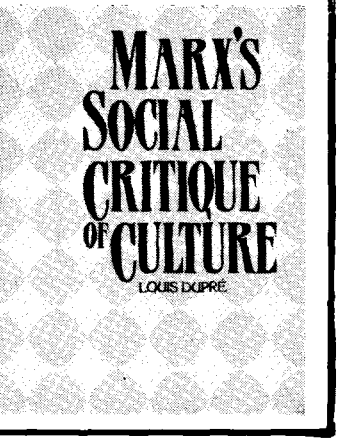
MARX'S SOCIAL CRITIQUE OF CULTURE
Louis Dupré £18.00 hbk
A critical reading of Marx's intepretation of culture. Dupré discusses the relation of Marx to previous philosophers, especially Hegel; the development and contradictions within Marx's conception of culture; the contribution of the various Marxists who followed Marx.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
Ely House, 37 Dover Street, London W1X 4HQ



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Testament has done nothing if not focus our attention on the loser in history. Fennis Augustine, fired, effectively, by Fleet Street hacks from his post as high commissioner for Grenada and the Grenadines, has said, 'This is not the time for tears'. Maurice Bishop and his friends' work will surely develop and flourish, like the phoenix from the ashes, as long as we all remember their New Jewel Movement. This inspiring collection of some of the speeches of Maurice Bishop is a moving record of the dedicated attempt to explain and convey their problems, decision, actions — and their predators' reactions — to their fellow Grenadians during the first three fruitful years of their revolution. This is the real thing. Backward? Never!

Robert Wyatt, musician

THE BLACK JACOBINS

C L R James

Allison and Busby

My favourite book? An impossible choice, for there are so many books jostling for priority. Therefore, I have settled for the most compelling book that I have read recently, *The Black Jacobins*. This historical study of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the outstanding black leader of the slaves in the French Colony of San Domingo (now Haiti) in the period following the French Revolution of 1789, was written by C L R James in the 30s.

Why does the book have such an appeal? It is a damning indictment of slavery, and inspiring in its account of the revolt of the slaves. But it doesn't present an idealised picture, and helps to explain why the 20th century outcome was the rule of Papa Doc and Baby Doc. The special feature of the book is the brilliant characterisation of Toussaint L'Ouverture. We see the way he was moulded by history and his unique influence on it. We see his great qualities and his weaknesses.

Betty Matthews,
Marxism Today editorial board

MARX AND HUMAN NATURE

Norman Geras

Verso £2.95 pbk

In one sense, I got most pleasure this year from re-reading Hazlitt's essays, which I hadn't even looked at since student days; in another, from Tony Gould's biography of that modern Hazlitt, Colin MacInnes. The latter may largely have been the result of identification: I was bound to enjoy the life-story of anyone who lived off weekly essays, and demanded to be paid for them in cash. In fact, it surprises no one more than myself that I am finally selecting Geras's slender, theoretical text. It is hardly entertaining; at times it seems impossibly pedantic, and it sets out to make a point which Geras himself says should not really need to be made: namely that Marx did not reject the idea of human nature, and further that he was right not to do so. Still, the pleasure for me in this book was one of the strongest the reading of literature provides: the joy of corroboration. Geras demonstrates that 'historical materialism itself, this whole distinctive approach to society that originates with Marx, rests squarely upon the idea of a human nature'. Whether an idea is 'Marxist' has always interested me less than whether or not it is true: but since Geras shows the idea of human nature is both of these things, perhaps we can now get on with the business of building in theory and practice a socialism which takes account of man's enduring ethical, aesthetic, and ecological needs.

Peter Fuller, critic

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REVIEWS

BABYLON
Jill Payton Walsh
Andre Deutsch

For the last few years it's been hard to find time to get through a daily paper during the week in which it's been printed. Usually they lie under the dining table for weeks. I haven't read many books, and the ones I've enjoyed most were printed years ago for the most part, like A H Halsey's *Change in British Society* or *Roll of Thunder, hear my cry* by the American writer Mildred D Taylor. But the most memorable thing I've read this year was Babylon by Jill Payton Walsh, a picture book supposedly for under-8s. Three small black Londoners wander around their neighbourhood, beguilingly depicted by Jennifer Northway. David leads the singing of 'By the waters of Babylon', which he learned at the Sunday Mission. His father has told him that the Zion in the hymn is Africa, but he reckons it's Jamaica which he remembers. Dulcie, the English-born youngest, is sad because 'I ain't got no Zion' to weep for.

When they rejoin their mother she reassures Dulcie that she will have something to weep for, by and by. Dulcie cheers up and runs home happy. Jull Paton Walsh, a white Briton, presents Jamaican speech rhythms accurately, and her story is pointed and funny. I think it's a book for adults.

Beverley Anderson, broadcaster

THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE ANCIENT GREEK WORLD
G E M de Ste Croix
Duckworth

Enjoy may not be quite the right word — except in the sense of the enjoyment one derives from a beautiful and rigorous piece of analysis. Here is an immensely long and immensely learned book which is equally remarkable as an example of Marxist methodology and as a contribution to our understanding of the ancient world.

Having demonstrated that Marx's class-based analysis is applicable to that world, Ste Croix turns to specific problems, most importantly, perhaps, that of slavery. His thesis is that the Greek world (of which he regards Rome as an integral part) can properly be regarded as a slave society because it was from the possession and exploitation of slaves that its ruling class drew the bulk of the surplus on which it depended. The fact, which he fully recognises, that most production was carried on by others — peasants and free artisans — is in this context irrelevant. In a short note it is not possible even to indicate the wealth of this book — I can only say, read it and give yourself an intellectual treat.

A L Morton, historian

THE FOREST
William Pomeroy
International Publishers New York

Truth is indeed stranger than fiction. This is the story of the outstanding courage and heroism of the people's army, the Huks, fighting against a puppet government set up by the Americans in the Phillippines at the end of the second world war, written by an ex-army officer who had fought the Japanese and later returned to the Phillippines to teach. He met and married a young woman whose lifetime had been given to the liberation struggle against the Japanese. Victory however had not brought the people freedom and prosperity.

The story recounts the small beginnings of a group of patriots, leaving civilisation to live, work and fight in the forest, growing in numbers by constant political argument and encouragement in the villages. The

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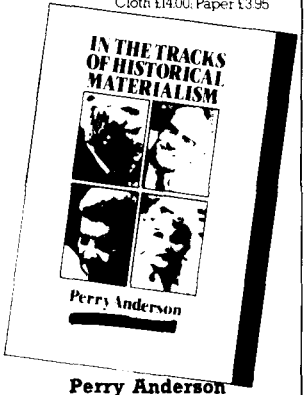

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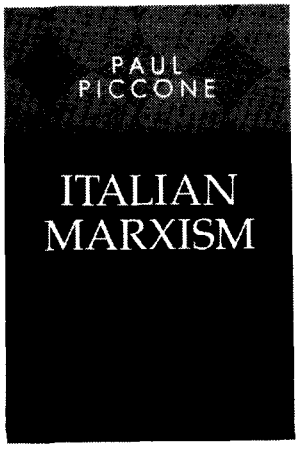

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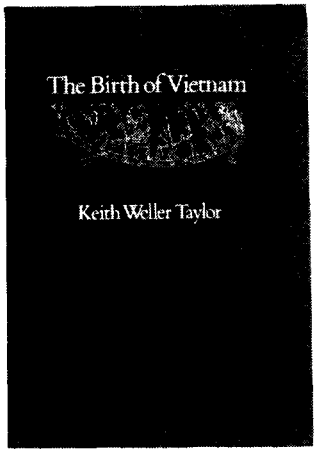

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author and his wife, Celia, joined the group and William tells at first hand of the years setting up camp after several days long trek, only to be discovered, and so repeating the process, in the damp sunless depths of the forest. The hardships endured — shortage of food, lack of medicines, difficulties in communication and eventual capture when near to death — make compelling reading. Their love for each other was only equalled by their love for the country and the cause for which they fought. This book is a must for anyone wanting to understand the history of people's struggles for liberation.

Marian Easdale, TUC woman of the year

THE LION AND THE UNICORN

George Orwell

Penguin

'England . . . resembles a family, a rather stuffy Victorian family, with not many black sheep in it but with all its cupboards bursting with skeletons. It has rich relations who have to be kow-towed to and poor relations who are horribly sat upon, and there is a deep conspiracy of silence about the source of family income . . . Still, it is a family. It has a private language and its common memories, and at the approach of an enemy it closes its ranks.'

The book, written during the Second World War, sets out Orwell's ideas on 'the British people' and the 'modes' that they live by. One of the book's beauties is the way in which Orwell makes his views so accessible to the reader, almost as though they were common thought. (Maybe they are?) He makes a distinction between culture and nationalism, which so easily get placed together, and argues that the English people do have some sort of common ground, culture, which he himself identifies with. However, he also argues that the 'very common source of identity' that we have is abused to divide the nation by the adoption of different modes/stratas of working, culture (theatre, bingo etc). Orwell calls it class: 'England', he says, 'is the most class-ridden country under the sun.' But he also says that England, or rather the people, do have an 'emotional unity'.

This book is a must for those who respect others' ideas and ideals. But perhaps most importantly this book is a must because it touches on some very basic questions, like responsibility, roots and the involvement of ordinary working people in politics, so that they have some say and responsibility for their own lives.

AnnaJoy David, YCND

SWEET AND SOUR

Stephen Mo

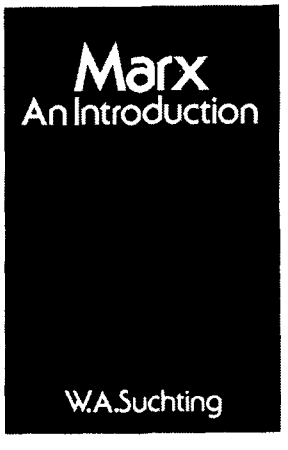
Sphere

This book gave me my first and only insight into the nature of the Chinese community in Britain, and into the extraordinary culture of the Chinese secret societies. These 'triads' now feature largely in *News of the World* exposés of the international drug ring, but their history is much deeper — they were originally a form of self protection against colonisers. The triads' own view of the police as — in their words — 'official bandits' provides a new perspective on a venerable profession.

Mo's book has an unusual, almost sweet and sour rhythm to it. Some reviewers describe it as severe; it is not exactly a stream of consciousness but it is a compelling and enjoyable read, and an important piece of social commentary.

Jack Straw, Labour MP

HARVESTER



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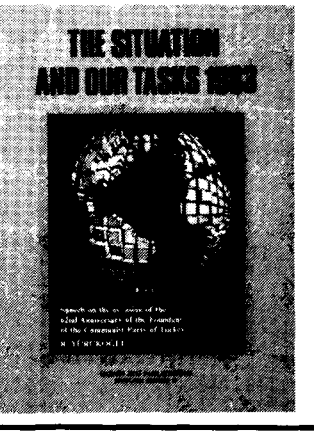

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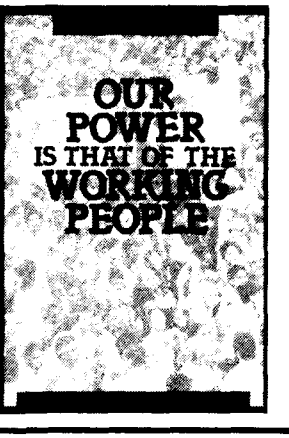

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VIEWPOINT

Labour's Lost Millions II

ERIC HEFFER: Alliances aren't the answer

The debate on Eric Hobsbawm's article in the October issue continues . . .

Eric Hobsbawm and Bob Rowthorn in the September and October issues of *Marxism Today* have undoubtedly made serious contributions to a necessary discussion about the future of the Labour Party. I wanted that discussion in depth before the party got caught up in a leadership campaign. There are many serious questions that need to be asked and answered. For example, why did the party do so well in Liverpool, and not too badly in Manchester, with known left-wing local leaderships, yet disastrously in other areas? Why were the results in London, the South and South East worse than in the North? Why, for example, did owner-occupiers in new homes vote Labour in Liverpool, yet clearly did not in some other parts of the country? Why did thousands of trade unionists vote Tory or SDP/Liberal Alliance? Why did the youth and women not respond as the party had hoped? What was wrong with our presentations? What effect did the Callaghan and Healey hiccoughs on defence have and why has the Labour vote consistently gone down since its high point in 1951? To what extent has the working class changed, and how much has the capitalist mores of 'I'm all right Jack' taken over, through television, adverts etc? To what extent has our national cohesion been undermined by the Common Market, and what effect did the jingoism of the Falklands war have on the nation as a whole, and the working class in particular? These are all important questions that have to be put.

What one has to accept is that some of the answers will flow from preconceived ideas. They will be a substitute for serious analysis. What I want to see is the acceptance by all in the Labour Party that we are a party based on Clause IV Part IV and that the results of our analysis are designed to strengthen our efforts to achieve our basic aims, and not as a way to weaken our purpose and objectives. There are those in the party who do seek to backslide. They must be resisted.

In his article, 'Think Positive — Rethink Labour', Bob Rowthorn is right to say, 'Now, above all, is the time for a serious rethink'. It depends of course what precisely is meant by 'rethink'. If it is a 'rethink' which ends up by retreating from Labour's immediate socialist objectives, then such a 'rethink' is dangerous, but if it means thinking out the best way to get the socialist message over to the electorate, to win back lost voters, and win other voters, then that is positive thinking, which can and should lead to Labour's victory at the next general election.

Back to the popular front

What really worries me about both Rowthorn's piece and the subsequent one by Eric Hobsbawm is their pessimism. They argue not so much that Labour can regain its lost support, or that it can appeal to newer layers of society, but that it can only really make progress if it makes some electoral or other arrangements with the SDP/Liberal Alliance. What they are really arguing for is an up to date version of the Popular Front with 'progressive' allies like the SDP/Liberals and the Communist Party also a part of it. The British CP, which is Eurocommunist, is one thing, the SDP/Liberal Alliance is surely something else. They can hardly be described as 'progression' in any way, especially after Owen's recent conference speech accepting the competive concept of capitalism.

The Rowthorn/Hobsbawm thesis is in essence, with refinements, a reversion to the argument for a government of 'national unity' put forward by the CP towards the end of the Second World War when the party leadership argued that such a government should include 'progressive Tories' like Churchill and Eden. At the time, I rejected such political nonsense as I reject today the belief that in order to win the next election or the one after, Labour must enter into some form of agreement with the SDP and Liberal Parties. Eric Hobsbawm clearly outlines his strategy when he says, 'If at the next election Thatcherism is everywhere opposed by two or more candidates competing for each other's votes, the Tories can look forward to being a power well into the 1990s'. It is no wonder that the Labour defector/SDP member, Evan Luard, in a letter to the *Guardian*, enthusiastically supported Hobsbawm's views.

PCI

It is possible that a strategy as outlined by Hobsbawm may be necessary for the CP in Italy where the political system and circumstances are very different, or that a united front of democratic parties is required in fascist countries, but it is unnecessary for Labour in Britain where it would lead to Labour's position becoming untenable and incredible. Eric Hobsbawm is clearly captivated by the PCI and gives it as an example the Labour Party should follow. I have the greatest admiration for the PCI. It is a genuine mass party of the Italian working class and in a European context Labour must be prepared to talk to and as far as it is possible and practicable, work with them. But to translate their political situation to us here in Britain would be a terrible mistake and would undermine the asset which Hobsbawm admits Labour has and that is 'the capacity to win an election and form a government single-handed'. It is that asset which caused Labour in the late 1930s to reject the Popular Front, and which made Labour go for a Labour government in 1945 and not a government of 'national unity' as suggested by the CP, and it is that asset which today must be the cornerstone of Labour's forward thinking.

Hobsbawm points to Bologna as an example of good city administration. I agree with him, but here in Britain it is possible to point to many cities with good civic administrations which over the years have had Labour majorities. Sheffield and Norwich are two of the best examples.

Hobsbawm says the CP in Italy has never forgotten that the party of the working class must be the party of the people. I would agree with that, but as far as Britain is concerned, that argument can be turned on its head. Too often the Labour Party has forgotten it is the party of the working class and over the years it has tended to alienate too many of its working class supporters. It did it with its *'In Place of Strife'* proposals under Harold Wilson and again with the 5% wage norm under Jim Callaghan.

Hobsbawm's basic theme is that he is seeking a role for the CP, and is using Labour's defects and setbacks as the excuse for doing so. I find his phraseology very interesting. Throughout his article he uses the words 'we' and 'us' implying that he is active in Labour's ranks instead of being in

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another political party which fielded candidates in the general election against Labour with derisory results. Why therefore anyone should take his pontificating as the last word in serious analysis is quite beyond me.

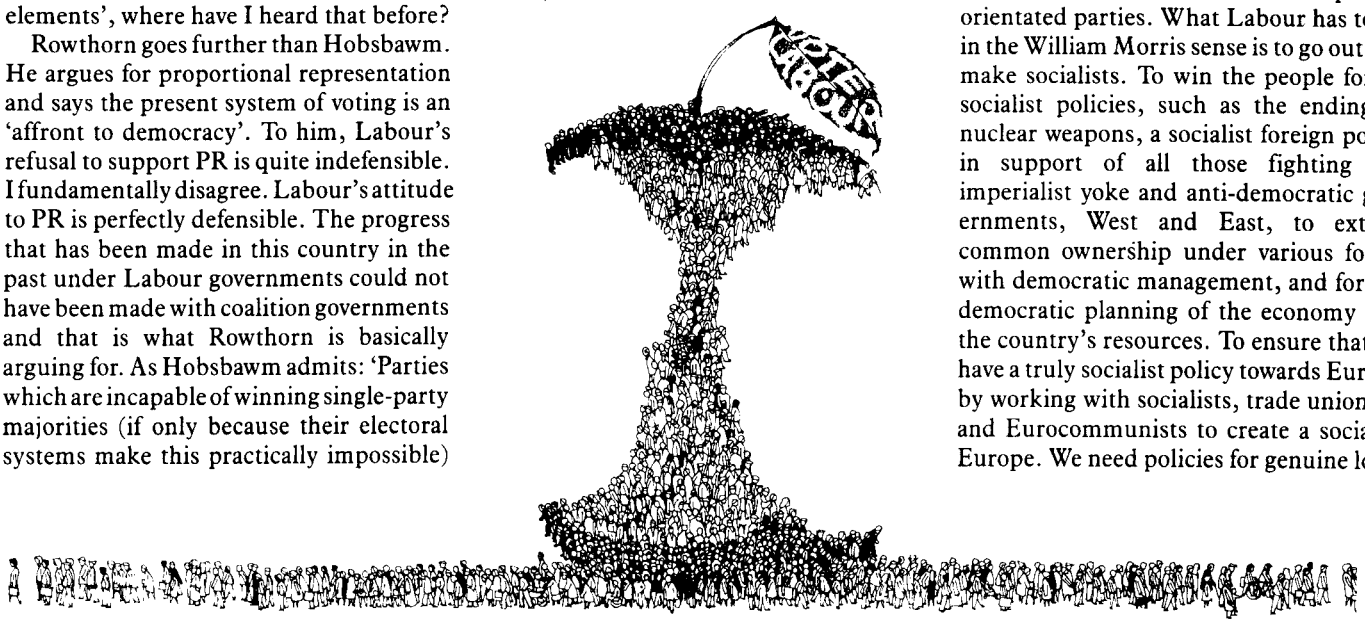
At the end of his article Hobsbawm rightly says, 'Labour will . . . have to win back those who switched from Labour to the Alliance, those who stayed at home, and a lot of those who are increasingly opting out of politics'. But his real alternative is the one to which I referred earlier, that Labour 'will have to learn how to lead a broad front of other parties or supporters into backing Labour's policy'.

PR

Although Hobsbawm is careful not to commit himself totally to an electoral alliance, he does say that some way of uniting the majority of the British people who are opposed to Thatcherism must be found and that the issue of electoral unity will have to be faced. Rowthorn, on the other hand, clearly spells out what is really meant by the new strategy when he says, 'The labour movement must become the focus of a broad anti-Thatcherite movement involving many who are not at present Labour voters and some who are not likely to become so'. The last few words are significant. He then goes on to say, 'The effect of such a broad popular movement . . . would be manifold . . . It would help to prevent the Alliance from drifting in a Thatcherite direction and strengthen the hand of the more progressive elements within the Alliance'. The truth is, the SDP have already drifted in a Thatcherite direction and been praised by the *Daily Telegraph* for so doing. As to 'progressive elements', where have I heard that before?

Rowthorn goes further than Hobsbawm. He argues for proportional representation and says the present system of voting is an 'affront to democracy'. To him, Labour's refusal to support PR is quite indefensible. I fundamentally disagree. Labour's attitude to PR is perfectly defensible. The progress that has been made in this country in the past under Labour governments could not have been made with coalition governments and that is what Rowthorn is basically arguing for. As Hobsbawm admits: 'Parties which are incapable of winning single-party majorities (if only because their electoral systems make this practically impossible) can speculate about the prospects of socialist transformation, but under conditions of democracy their governments will almost invariably be at the mercy of coalition parties who act as brakes upon them'. Without going too far into the argument against PR, I think Hobsbawm in that sentence gives us good reason as to why our present system *is* defensible.

There are many points in Hobsbawm's article that need challenging. He says there were far too many people not seriously trying to defeat Thatcher whatever their official rhetoric. That the opposition parties were engaged in a civil war rather than fighting the Right. The latter argument is one used by Labour's right wing against the constitutional changes and policy changes made between 1979 and 1982. He, like Labour's Right, says that the changes fought for were about the next but one election, as the last one had already been written off. This has too often been said, yet not a shred of evidence has been forthcoming to sustain that argument. He says, for example, 'that a large body of the Left acted as though another Labour government like the ones we have had before from time to time since 1945, was not just unsatisfactory, but worse than no Labour government'. I have to say as a leading member of the Labour Party who in the last four years spoke at public meetings and party rallies, meetings, schools, dinners etc, all over Britain, that I never once heard that view and if Eric Hobsbawm has evidence he should give chapter and verse. Certainly, there are groups who *were* in Labour's ranks who did not want a Labour victory, and Hobsbawm admits this. They were those who defected and joined the SDP, defectors who originally said they were democratic socialists, but who now argue that they are not socialists and have no wish to be considered as such.



Labour's appeal

Hobsbawm is right to say that the SDP/Liberal Alliance knew they could not form a government, yet they said they could during the election, and were backed up in these false assertions by a hostile media and press which knew perfectly well that it was helping to weaken Labour's vote and its chances of forming a government. This leads me to the point, rightly made by Hobsbawm, that the anti-Thatcher vote was split. The facts are that this was partly caused by the deliberate manipulation of the polls by some parts of the press. Unfortunately, Labour had a divided leadership which was clearly brought out during the election campaign. Also Jim Callaghan's speech helped to confuse Labour supporters. These factors undermined Labour's support and drove some previous supporters towards the SDP/Liberal Alliance.

Hobsbawm is right to say that Labour must appeal to 'all workers by hand and brain'. It is true that the manual working class based on heavy engineering, the mines, the shipyards, the docks etc, has declined, as have the tribal areas in which they lived, but it is not true to say the working class has overall diminished. It is a different working class. Labour must still make its appeal to the working class by bringing its propaganda and organisational methods up to date. It must not, however, abandon the workers. If it does its basic class base will disappear and it will be little different to other reformist capitalist orientated parties. What Labour has to do in the William Morris sense is to go out and make socialists. To win the people for its socialist policies, such as the ending of nuclear weapons, a socialist foreign policy in support of all those fighting the imperialist yoke and anti-democratic governments, West and East, to extend common ownership under various forms with democratic management, and for the democratic planning of the economy and the country's resources. To ensure that we have a truly socialist policy towards Europe by working with socialists, trade unionists and Eurocommunists to create a socialist Europe. We need policies for genuine local

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democracy, with the advancement of education, housing, welfare etc. In other words to advocate and support every effort to create a genuine democratic classless society. That does mean whilst advocating and working for detente and peace the rejection of the internal undemocratic regimes in Eastern Europe which have done so much harm to socialism throughout the world.

Some of what Hobsbawm says one can agree with. Labour must be a broad people's party based on the organised working class movement. He is right to say we must pay attention to the 16% of trade unionists who stopped voting Labour since 1974, to the 71% of youngsters who voted but failed to vote Labour, and to the 72% of women who voted Tory or Alliance. Labour must listen more carefully to its grass roots supporters, but that should not be used as an excuse for dropping its basic socialist policies. I agree with the quote from Tony Banks MP which is clearly disapproved of by Hobsbawm, when Banks said it would be fatal 'if the Labour Party now started to fish around for a set of policies that upset no one and changed nothing'.

Socialism now

Hobsbawm misunderstands the position of the old ILP as he does the CP today. Outside the mainstream of the Labour Party and the trade unions the ILP had no future.

The Labour Party today is not in the same situation as the ILP in the 30s. The majority of the ILP left the Labour Party and went into decline because of that. The CP was not officially admitted to the Labour Party and they have never really advanced outside the Labour Party. That is particularly true since the 1956 Hungarian revolution and the invasion of Czechoslovakia. More to the point, the danger in Britain is that unless Labour works at it, it could become miniscule like the socialists in America with the trade unions becoming 'Gomperised' and the SDP/Liberal Alliance becoming the alternative capitalist party, just as the Democratic Party is the political alternative to the Republican Party in the US. That is what both Mrs Thatcher and Dr Owen want and our task is to ensure that that does not happen. If we try for an alliance or agreement with the SDP/Liberal Alliance we would be giving them credibility, and the Labour Party would suffer as a result. That road is a false road and must be rejected.

Hobsbawm is right to say the masses need Labour, but wrong when he argues they will not go to Labour on Labour's terms. It depends of course what Labour offers. What is he proposing apart from an agreement with the SDP/Liberal Alliance? I have thoroughly searched his article and cannot find an answer. His analysis is partially correct. I believe his conclusions are wholly wrong.

The theory of a new popular front with Labour making 'alliances' is further developed in another article in *Marxism Today* (October issue) by Dave Priscott. What he says is that whilst we must not equate Thatcherism with Hitlerism, nevertheless it should be remembered that before Nazism gained power they had to destroy democracy and therefore there are similarities between Thatcherism and Hitlerism. This argument I have heard before. Some of Labour's leaders, both right and left, have made speeches more or less accusing Mrs Thatcher of fascism. I disagree with that charge because I believe it fails completely to understand the nature of fascism. The Thatcher philosophy is right wing, old-fashioned laissez-faire capitalism. It is reactionary to the core, but it is not fascism, and it does not do Labour's cause any good to suggest that it is. It should be recalled that during the so-called 'Third Period' social democrats were called by the CP 'social fascists'. They were wrong then as they are wrong now to call Thatcherism 'fascism'.

Communist Party

Clearly, Priscott wants a new broad democratic alliance, one in which the Communists will play an important part. To that end, he says, 'Socialism Now' is not a rallying cry that will at this time build a political majority against Thatcherism.

As one who has watched the CP over the years, who has noted their various efforts to water down the socialist content of the CP policy, and who as a party have been obsessed with alliances, popular and united fronts, one must ask the question, why should they be any more correct today than they were in the past.

Yes, Labour needs to be an alliance, but an alliance within and around the party. Labour must as a party go out and win the women's vote, the youth's vote, the ethnic vote and the votes of all those in capitalist society who are discriminated against. The reality is that it is only socialist policies that have any real answer to the problems of all the groups mentioned, including the 'upward mobile' working class and the middle class.

The Labour Party must listen to all those in the movement and amongst the people who have a contribution to make. It mus take on board all serious propositions an suggestions. It must update and refine it policies but it must do so as an independen party, not getting itself enmeshed i alliances with others, not even those on th Left who are clearly seeking a way out o their own isolation. Labour has in its rank many with diverse views and always wil have. Recently, the party has gone throug a period of renewal. The constitutiona changes with some possible refinement will remain. It has a fight on its hand against the Tories' endeavours to weaken it connection with the trade unions. The party has radicalised its policies over the past few years since 1979. Those policies may well need to be updated, but they do not need to be radically altered.

The important point is that to a large extent the renewal process has been completed, and now the time has come to consolidate the changes, to translate them into campaigns throughout the country and win support for the party. The new leadership are there because of the changes; they must use the opportunity presented to them to the full.

What is required now is for the Labour Party to build up its individual and affiliated membership until it becomes a truly mass party, a campaigning party with strong workshop branches which will give a lead at every level, district, area, regional and national, both politically and in industry. The party must particularly build its strength in the factories and workplaces. That is already being done but the process must be stepped up. The pessimism of Hobsbawm and the defeatism of Rowthorn have to be rejected. That is the way forward for Labour.

I believe the CP is an anachronism. Its *British Road to Socialism*, whilst looked upon as a sort of bible for the faithful, has no real appeal to the mass of the people because it comes from the CP. The CP is divided. One group of super-Stalinists have left it, but others remain, and although the Euro-communists at present control the party, that cannot be guaranteed for all time. As long as some CPers look to the Soviet Union for political guidance, surely they cannot be taken seriously by the British electorate as a party. Unfortunately, some Euro-communists have moved into a right-wing social democratic position. That is why on most issues, the PCI is more to the right than the Labour Party. The Labour Party must remain firm on its socialist principles and it must not be weaned away from them because it suffered serious reverses in the last general election.

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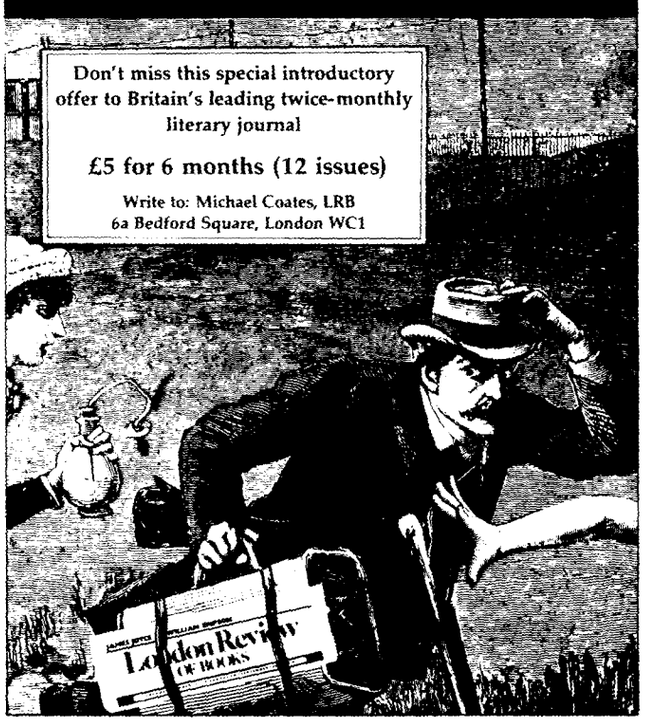

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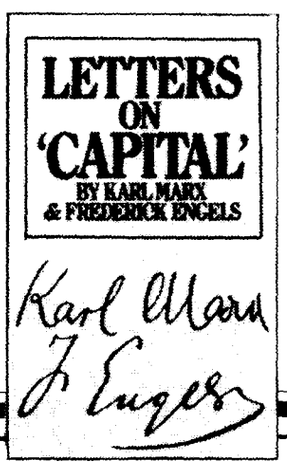

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Letters

GEORGE MELLY

Your interesting interview with George Melly, recorded by Simon Frith, in the November issue, illustrates some of the dangers of exposing even such an intelligent musician and thinker as Melly to the sudden need to give snap answers to complex questions.

Melly's response on surrealism, for example, might tempt a reader into the narrow opinion that surrealism is concerned chiefly with horror. Whereas the history of this movement in art shows that its relation to the substance of dream is as much involved with paradox, humour, and lyrical fantasy, as it is with nightmare. Consider Magritte, or Pablo Neruda.

More seriously, in his answer to the question of the political significance of art, Melly first asserts that art is a substitute for politics, then corrects himself and argues that art reflects life; and then, bogged down by his references to Kafka and Bacon, ends up supporting the idea that art is a form of prophecy, which is an unadmitted second correction. How confused, and how confusing.

Spurred on by his questioner, Melly next goes on to suggest that official Art is 'cake icing' for the state. What this attractive image understates is that work funded and directed by the state is not art at all. It is, rather, pseudo-art, that is to say Kitsch, as is most advertising, and much religious propaganda.

Philip Crick, Kingston on Thames

DIVERTING THE STRUGGLE

I want to express my opinion concerning Tricia Davis' article in the October issue of *Marxism Today*. I find the structure of her article is sectarian in nature, and the cartoon images depicting women in a dominant superior role is offensive to men and women. The important thing to do is to portray men and women in unity, fighting against capitalism to achieve socialism in a broad demiocratic alliance.

Her last paragraph; that women can win the struggle for socialism on behalf of the working class, is a naïve, selfish statement that undermines the broad democratic alliance. There are socialist women in the movement who put political struggle before their own sex, and see it as the most important battle in achieving equalities for all sections of the working class. If we put too much emphasis on feminism, we not only narrow the movement, but divert political struggle from challenging the capitalist system.

Vic Mortimer, Tamworth

We welcome your letters for the January issue. They should be no longer than 200 words and arrive at the office not later than Friday, 9 December.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Aidan White is a journalist on the *Guardian*.
Paul Corrigan is the Head of the Department of Applied Social Studies, North London Polytechnic.
Walter Easey was a police inspector in Hongkong 1962-8. He is the author of *Ducking Responsibility: Britain and Hongkong in the 1980s*.
John Cox is vice-president of CND.
Andy Green has taught in Grenada and writes on education.
Keith Dixon and **Daniel Perraud** teach in Grenoble and are members of the French Communist Party.
Michael Ward has chaired the GLC Industry and Employment Committee since 1981 and been a member of London Labour Party Executive Committee since 1977.
Fred Halliday is the author of *The Making of the Second Cold War*.
Rosalind Brunt teaches communication studies at Sheffield Polytechnic and is co-editor of *Feminism, Culture and Politics*.
Trevor Blackwell is a part-time tutor for the WEA.
Edmund Penning-Rowsell is chairman of the International Exhibition Wine Society.
Eric Heffer is a Labour MP and member of Labour's shadow front bench.

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Update

CAMPAIGNS

Nobody's Backyard 1-3 Dec. Christian and Third World groups will be organising events to focus on what is happening in countries like El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. The issues are the fight for social justice, the principle of non-intervention, provision of basic needs and respect for human rights, and the right to peace. More information from Nobody's Backyard, 4 Replingham Road, London SW18.

Daws Hill Peace Camp Sat 17 Dec. The Peace Camp, at Daws Hill Lane, High Wycombe will be celebrating its first anniversary. Please bring tent, sleeping bag, blankets and food.

CONFERENCES

Private Tenants Charter 3 Dec. A rally with workshops on tenant involvement, local authority and voluntary sector initiatives, and local and national campaigns for private tenants, local government officers, politicians, campaigners, advice workers and lawyers. At the University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1. £2.00 waged and tenants representatives, unwaged free. Called by Organisation of Private Tenants, 30 Camden Road, London NW1 tel 01 267 5328.

Can Science Save Municipal Socialism 13 Dec. One of a series of meetings on the politics of science. This deals with local planning and technical change. Organised by the Manchester Group of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science at the Polytechnic Students Union, Sidney Street, Manchester 10. 7.30pm. Further information from D Russell 061 226 6077.

Computers, privacy and the law 7 Dec. One in a series of meetings on the theme of living in 1984, addressing itself to the question of freedom and individual rights. 6.30 to 8.30pm Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Square, London WC1 tel 831 7711.

A lutta continua 10 Dec. A study conference on Mozambique and Angola, organised by the Mozambique Angola Committee. Registration £2 in advance, £2.50 on the door.

PUBLICATIONS

Housmans Peace Diary A practical diary which combines a directory of the peace movement, profiles of the major organisations and dates for peace makers to celebrate or mark with protest. Price £2.50.

Gay Men's Press This pocket sized diary has good picture research and layout. It combines a directory of relevant organisations with special features on health and self defence. Price £3.00.

1984 Better Days Calendar Peace in the Public Eye 1870 — 1984 will be the theme for the calendar based on posters and other materials showing aspects of peace campaigning since 1870. £2.50 from Better Days, 92 Western Road London E13. All proceeds go to peace groups.

Contemporary Women Artists Produced by the Women's Press, this well designed diary has 35 full colour reproductions of the work of contemporary women artists. Price £3.50.

Spare Rib The most comprehensive guide to women's activities around. This year's theme is women and music and the pages are lilac! Contains a menstrual calendar, as well as 40 pages of information, groups and contacts. Price £2.75.

The Big Red Disarmament Diary compiled by Martin Ryle and Kate Soper. Well researched, it contains peace camp addresses, details of the anti-nuclear movement and a directory of campaigns, pressure groups, radical alternatives and bookshops. Price £2.95.

ShopTalk A new quarterly magazine written by people in retailing for shopworkers, about pay and conditions in stores in London's West End. More information from Cathy Mackenzie tel 01 698 6177.

Trump Cards A pocket sized set of cards with snappy arguments for doorstep debaters and public speakers on peace issues. Produced by North West CND, price 50p a set (including p & p). 10 sets or more 40p. Available from 7 Quarington Road, Bristol 7. Avon.

Test Cases for the Poor. A pamphlet which unravels the increasingly complex social security legislation, an essential guide to future use of legal techniques in pressure group activity. Produced by Child Poverty Action Group and available from 1 Macklin Street, London WC2 tel 01 242 3225. Price £2.75.

EVENTS

Blockade of 'Wales Bomb Factory' 2-3 Dec. An all-Wales demonstration against the 'radioactive' ROF factory at Llanisten Cardiff, which manufactures parts for nuclear weapons. Called by CND, the event includes a picket of the gates, and march from the factory into Cardiff city centre.

Benefit for El Salvador 4 Dec. organised by the GLC with Julie Christie, the Flying Pickets, Peggy Seeger, Ewan McColl, Tony Sher, Yolo Cambarta. Compared by Andy de la Tour. Tickets £4 and £6. Queen Elizabeth Hall 7.30pm.

The Great Peace 12-17 Dec. The Theatre Underground presents the first British production of Volker Braun's critical and ironical allegory of revolutionary power. The playwright, East Germany's leading young theatre writer and poet, will be in attendance. At Essex University Theatre, Wivehoe Park, Colchester tel 0206 86196. Tickets £1 or £2.

Voluntary Service Overseas Exhibition 21-23 Dec. An exhibition of photographs, illustrations, graphics, written materials and 3 dimensional objects to give the public an impression of the type of work undertaken by the British volunteers who assist with development programmes overseas. Admission free. At the Commonwealth Institute tel 01 603 4535.

Pre-Christmas social with politics 4 Dec. Drinks, chat, video showing of Stuart Hall's Marx Memorial Lecture 83. Organised by Marxism Today and North West CP. 7.30pm The Black Lion, Chapel Street, Salford. £1 waged, 50p unwaged.

Entries for the January update should be sent as soon as possible (latest date Friday 9 December) to Maria Loftus, Marxism Today 16 St John Street London EC1 or tel 01-251 4406 or 01-607 3344 (evenings).

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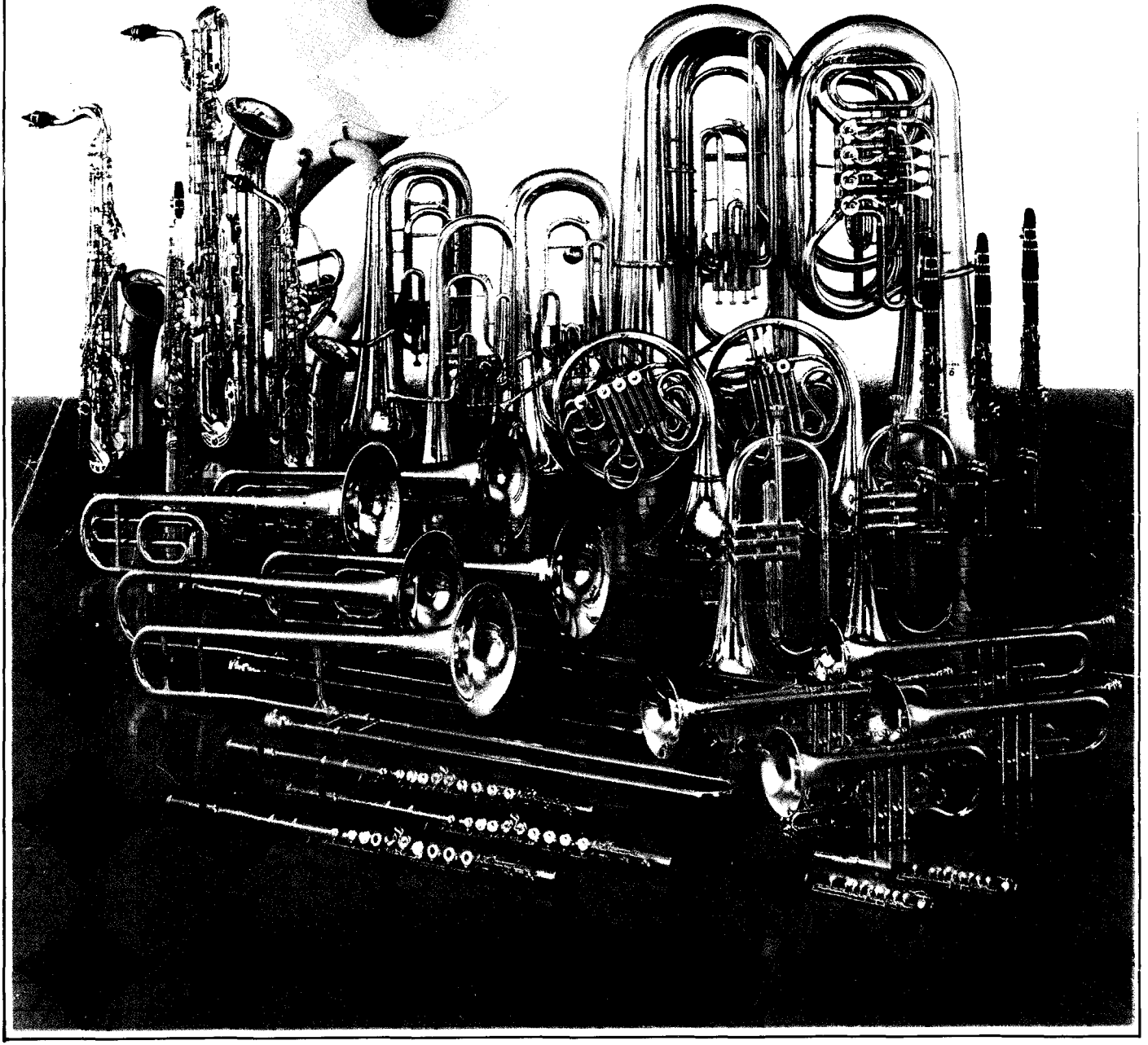

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